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HATARAKU MAOU-SAMA!

VOLUME 16

Written by Wagahara Satoshi

Illustrated by 029 (Oniku)



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CREDITS



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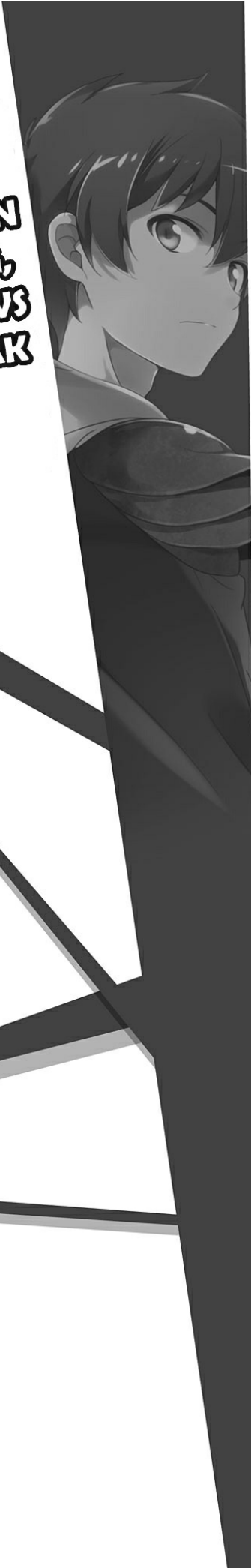
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CHAPTER 1

THE DEMON KING, WEAK

**THE
DEMON
KING,
GROWS
WEAK**



The sounds of dogs barking from somewhere cut through the night.

There were not many cars on the roads, and not only were there no people, not even a stray cat could be seen.

Walking into a side road, only dim lights remained, and at the intersection devoid of people, the traffic signals unreliably flickered to the emptiness in three colors.

One in the morning.

The streets of Sasazuka in the Shibuya district of Tokyo seemed to be in the midst of recording everything which had happened the day before, sleeping in preparation for tomorrow.

Amongst them, a man rode his bicycle in a curled-up position, pedalling home with a tired expression.

In the streets where everything had fallen asleep, only the man and the bicycle moved shakily forward, as if they were chasing the yesterday which had gone.

Physically and mentally, that man was exhausted.

His breathing, the sound of the moving bicycle, and the occasional braking sound heard from the round plate at the back wheel did not at all match the surroundings.

Only the sound of dogs barking in the distance, the honking of cars on the Koshu Kaido, and the sound of cold wind ravaging the streets, blowing past the ear, were residents of the night.

While the sources of these sounds were nowhere to be seen, they surely affected the man, draining more energy from his already exhausted body.

Even so, the man nevertheless recognized the outline of his home at the other end of the darkness, and squeezed out the last of his energy pedalling.

Presently, no traces of habitation could be felt at all, but to the

man, this was still the stable home he should return to.

The man exhaled deeply as he parked his bicycle, producing a white puff of air. Then, as he spurred on his body which suddenly felt heavy having reached home, he started to climb the public staircase outside the apartment.

The cold winter night made the handrails as cold as ice, and after entering the common corridor, the door handles felt the same.

The fluorescent light, which was close to breaking down, produced a whirring sound as it approached its end, no signs of people could be felt from the dim common corridor and the porch facing it.

After a few tries with his frigid hands, the man finally inserted the key into one of the porch doors with “201” written on it.

The interior of the room lit up by the old fluorescent light was a dull-looking, six tatami sized room.

No furniture or decorations could be seen within the room, the man pulled the chain on the ceiling lamp, and within the room lit up by the round fluorescent light, only “a stack of objects” could be seen in the corner.

The man confirmed the time using the watch he had taken off, and he immediately shifted his gaze away after glancing at the tatami in the middle of the room.

“It’ll be a tiring day tomorrow, I should sleep earlier.”

After putting the watch in his pocket, the man took off his jacket, hung it next to the window with a hanger, and in the room where the temperature was almost the same as the outside, he took off the rest of his clothes as he shivered.

As he undressed, he took out a set of sweatshirt and sweatpants he used as pajamas from the closet, and quickly changed into the clothes which were, as expected, extremely cold.

“Ugh~ so cold.”

After mumbling this, the man plugged his phone into the charger. He stood in front of the old kitchen, filled up the consistently-used water kettle, and placed it on the gas stove to heat it up.

Then, the man picked up an ovular turtle-shell-like object from the area next to the sink.

There was a screw cap on the turtle-shell-like object, and when the water kettle, as if to emphasize the coldness of the room, began to produce steam, the man excitedly poured the boiling hot water into the turtle shell — also known as a hot water bag.

“Hot, hot.”

The man wiped off the hot water that spilled over because he did not properly pour it and slotted the hot water bag into a handmade drawstring bag.

Then—

“This is, truly, the only redemption left.”

—the man started to spread out a futon.

That is right, he was spreading out a futon!

A futon set made up of a mattress, blanket, and quilt!

“Ugh..... ah... ufuu...”

The man hugged the hot water bag and crawled under the futon, groaning as he did so.

The surface of the futon was as cold as the interior temperature, but it gradually warmed up because of the hot water bag and the man’s body temperature.

However, while his cold body began to feel relief, his heart still clenched coldly.

Not long ago, this room in this apartment was still a lively and bright place.

The man had comrades who lived with him, and no matter how

late he reached home, that person would always wait with warm cooking to soothe this man's heart, exhausted from work.

All the residents knew each other, and there were many visitors. Many people would frequently gather around the same table in this room to eat.

Though there were no heating apparatus, this room was still a very warm room.

Now, only the man was left.

There was no lively dining table, and no equipment for cooking.

Only cucumbers, konjaku, and milk was left in the fridge, and the fridge was only plugged in to prevent the milk from getting frozen from the interior temperature which, for unknown reasons, was colder than outside.

The things which warmed this room in the past had mostly been moved to a place located very far away from the man.

And replacing them was the futon.

Early on, the man had mentally prepared himself, determined to face this situation.

Now, he understood how naïve this determination was.

No one would visit him.

No one would wait for him.

No one would cook for him.

No one would call his name.

Everything, which had been in this room not long ago, was no longer here.

“Ashiya, Urushihara.”

The man softly called out the names of the others.

“Emi, Alas=Ramus, Suzuno.”

In the futon, these mumbles were transmitted only into the man's ears.

“Chi-chan...”

The white-colored sigh, exhaled from his finally warm body, instantly dissipated into the room.

“...I feel a little lonely.”

They were going to fight a battle to obtain a birthday present for his daughter. Then, to take down the God on the way, Maou Sadao, who had moved the people who lived together with him and most of the living necessities to the faraway foreign world “Continents of the Holy Cross, Ente Isla,” mumbled so in a rather serious tone.

※

Rather than the future of the humans and the survival of the world, the wish of his only “daughter” was more important.

Simply put, Maou Sadao and Yusa Emi's judgement was this.

In a way which could only be described as sudden, the “daughter,” Alas=Ramus, descended between the Demon King and Hero who, just like fire and water, did not get along.

The three of them were not blood related, but ignoring how it was “between husband and wife,” the bonds between “parent and child” at least were real.

Neither the hundreds, or even thousands of years Lailah had spent making preparations, nor the crisis Ente Isla was going to face, were able to spur Maou or Emi into taking action.

As a demon, Maou had no reason to save the humans, and even if she was known as the Hero in the past, it did not mean that Emi was obligated to save Ente Isla.

The people who treasured the two of them also knew this very well.

Therefore, no matter how much Lailah tried to persuade them, or

how much Gabriel, who seemed to have a complex relationship with Lailah behind the scenes, tried to urge them on, the ones around Maou and Emi, Ashiya Shiro, Urushihara Hanzo, Kamazuki Suzuno and Sasaki Chiho—

“You should save the humans of Ente Isla.”

—did not say this to them.

However, in the end, everyone, even those who had finally obtained a safe place in Japan to settle down after a bloody battle — everyone, including Chiho, still made up their minds to take part in the “Battle of Bringing Down God,” which would still save the humans of Ente Isla “in the end.”

This was definitely not based on the noble ideal to save the world or humanity.

Everyone wanted to fulfill the small and innocent wish belonging to a cute young girl and made up their minds to throw themselves into battle because of their fondness for the young girl.

『I want to meet with ‘Malkuth,’ and everyone.』

Before Alas=Ramus spent her first Christmas in Japan, Maou and the others had gathered, discussing the present they were going to give her.

However, Alas=Ramus only wanted to reunite with her past comrades, important friends, or beloved family.

The sacred gems which were born from the Tree of Life protecting the humans of Ente Isla — Children of the Sephirah, the “everyone” Alas=Ramus wanted to meet again, the ones other than “Yesod” and “Geburah” — were the Sephirah children, who were imprisoned by Heaven. If they wanted to fulfill her wish, they would have to take part in the “the Battle to Defeat God,” which was what Lailah and Gabriel were hoping for.

The Demon King, the Hero, and their comrades gathered for one single reason.

To fulfill the wish of the girl they loved.

They did not care about the humans of Ente Isla at all.

The Demon King, the Hero, and their comrades stepped onto the stage where they had to put their lives on the line, for the sake of Alas=Ramus.

※

“Of course I’m mentally prepared to stake my life – I still am.”

Maou, who frowned because of the winter sunlight shining through the windows, slowly got up.

He looked at the clock: it was 6:30 in the morning.

Daytime arrived much earlier than usual, but the chill felt after just waking up was still difficult to accept.

Because he now had a futon, which he had previously determined not to buy, it became difficult to describe the hardship felt when waking up in the morning.

The reason he did not want to buy the futon before was because he felt that he would be unable to return to Ente Isla if he bought it, but in the end, when he could return, he was met with a situation in which he had no choice but to buy one, which was ironic.

Choosing to abandon this warmth and make contact with the cold air also required a significant amount of determination and courage.

“I won’t be able to eat breakfast properly if I sleep here... ahhhh! *All right!*”

Maou continued to take his time, staying in the futon, but because it was almost time for him to leave for work, he gathered what little motivation he had left and departed the futon.

“Ah~ coldcoldcoldcoldthiscankillsomeonepleasespareme, ahhhh!”

Any traces of sleepiness disappeared in a flash, but at the same

time, his blood pressure rose to the point where it might cause a heat shock.

Even so, no matter how much he angrily shouted, there were no heating facilities in this room. And as Maou complained, just like the night before, he filled up the water kettle and heated it, placing his hands over the water kettle as he waited for it to boil.



“Sorry, Alas=Ramus... Papa, seems to be a little depressed.”

Maou apologized to his “daughter,” who was not present, because of his own weak heart.

He rubbed his hands and legs together and surveyed the empty six tatami room, thinking back to why things had turned out this way.

The “God” ruling Heaven, the angels’ leader, Ignora.

If they wanted to reach where she was, they needed to go to Heaven; however, for reasons unknown, they were unable to use the “Gate” to connect to Heaven at present.

They did not know whether they were unable to travel from either side or that it was only impossible to go there from Ente Isla or Earth, but anyway, if Maou and the others wanted to go to Heaven, they had to navigate to Heaven... also the blue moonthe angels had turned into their base, from the surface of Ente Isla.

And the “spaceship” they needed was the Demon Fortress Maou had built in the past to conquer Ente Isla, currently located on Ente Isla’s Central Continent; however, they discovered that if they wanted to restore the Demon Fortress to the state where it could fly through space, they were missing a few things.

The four items of the “Ancient Demon King Satan’s Legacy:”

- “*Nothung*,” known as a demonic sword.
- *Adramelechinus’ demonic spear, which was used by Demon General Adramelech in the past.*
- “*Ginkan no Mado*,” which was recorded as a forbidden spell and passed down.
- “*the Astral Gem*,” a highly concentrated energy crystal which could not be replicated in the modern era.

Maou and the others had to find the four legacies which were

collectively known as “Noah Gear,” but other than knowing that the three legacies, excluding the demonic spear, could be found in the Demon World, they did not know the locations of those legacies at all.

Camio, the proxy for the Demon King, was focusing his efforts to search for the sword, the Mado, and energy in various places in the Demon World, but these were things that would not be immediately found.

During this time, in the Central Continent of Ente Isla, the combined teams of humans and demons were reorganizing the Demon Fortress and looking for surviving demons, preventing interference from factions who did not know about the situation.

The humans sent Heather Lumark, who was said to possess influence second to only the Saint Aire royal family, and Alberto Ende, one of the Hero’s comrades.

The demons sent the young Malebranche chieftain Farfarello, who had connections to the Sephirah children and got along with Chiho, a human who knew about Maou’s situation in Japan.

The trio were the on-site commanders, and using the pretext “demolishing the Demon Fortress and getting rid of the remaining demons” as a cover story, they carried out the “human-demon operation to defeat God.”

While humans and demons were only temporarily working together in a single area, this was something which would have been impossible a few years ago. Taking this into consideration, this was a peaceful situation spanning species.

However, not only was this peaceful state limited in scope, it was a very private relationship --the reason why this peaceful state could be maintained was because most of the nations and citizens of the world did not know about it, and they would not understand even if they were told about it.

If they did not take down the God living on the moon, the holy

magic permeating the world would disappear in the near future and humans would also go extinct; who would believe this ridiculous sounding fact?

And if someone seriously said that this news came from the angels recorded in the Bible, and that even the Demon King and Hero, who arrived in a foreign world after a fierce battle, were working together towards the same goal, their mental state would definitely be questioned.

Everyone wanted to quickly complete the restoration of the world “after the Demon King Army disappeared” and obtain an advantage in the new system. Therefore, like a raging fire, these kind of power games were now taking place in Ente Isla.

If this operation was found out by unrelated personnel at this stage, some countries would only focus on the fact that they were cooperating with demons, bringing new conflict to the world.

In the current human world, the existence of the “Hero” alone was already troublesome for them, and there was a time the world had wanted to betray the Hero.

Currently, there were enough commanding officers, and thanks to Ashiya, Urushihara, Suzuno, and Emerada, the humans and the demons were able to work together smoothly.

As a result, there was nothing to criticize about the chain of command, and even if the angels attack suddenly, there was Gabriel and Lailah, as well as Ashiya and Urushihara, who could use their full powers in Ente Isla.

Simply put, rather than saying that there was no need for Maou Sadao and Yusa Emi to be present, it was more like they would only cause trouble if they stayed there.

Strong people will attract attention just by gathering in one place.

All the people Maou knew had connections to the Western Continent, but this time, through Ashiya’s connections, the Eastern

Continent sent many people over as well.

Logically, Knight Heather Lumark, General of the most powerful nation of the Western Continent, Holy Saint Aire, and the overall commander of the Five Continent Knight Alliance, as well as Alberto Ende and Emerada Etuva, the comrades of the Hero, would not travel to the Central Continent without reason.

After the arrival of the “Hakin Knights,” the elite knight troop from the Eastern Continent, that place became even more eye-catching.

With regards to the Eastern Continent obstructing the restoration of the Central Continent, the west and east sides were in a series of negotiations to reach a compromise; the Northern Continent, Southern Continent, and the Western Continent states believed this excuse.

Even so, to avoid attracting too much attention from the other countries as much as possible, Lumark, Alberto, Emerada, and the Hakin generals made painstaking efforts to adjust their itineraries to prevent too much overlap in the time periods they stayed at the Central Continent.

After all, other than Suzuno, Emerada, and the others who had been to the foreign world of Japan, in the Eastern Continent, only the Unifying Azure Emperor and some of the Hakin Knight Generals under his command knew about this operation.

In the Western Continent, only the knights under Lumark’s command and the sorcerers from the Sorcery Management Institute, some of the clerics from the Inquisition, Saint Aire’s king and prince, and the six Archbishops, the highest strategic body in the Church, knew about this. As for the Northern Continent and Southern Continent, they were completely excluded.

If Emi, who was known by many people, or Maou, who would cause many demons to bow to him, remained on the scene, it would just be a hindrance.

“We will call for you when you’re needed, so until then, just live normally in Japan,” Kamazuki Suzuno, well known in the west, the east, and among the demons, and the sole mediator in this operation, declared.

“Chiho-dono is currently in an important period of her life where she has to take exams next year. A forty-minute journey one way with a total time of one hour and twenty minutes both ways is really too far for a high school student. We cannot allow Chiho-dono to spend too much time in places beyond school and work. We won’t go as far as forbidding her to come, but just like the time at Room 201, we have to ask her to stick to the minimum necessary action. And...” lastly, as if Suzuno was teasing Maou, she said with a rather lonely smile, “having you stay in Japan would put Chiho-dono at ease.”

Maou harbored many opinions about this, but he was unable to protest the statement.

In the first place, Maou did not really approve of Chiho coming to Ente Isla to help him and Emi.

With things as they were it could not be said that Chiho was completely unrelated to Ente Isla, but allowing Chiho, who did not have any battle prowess and was just an ordinary high school student, to participate in this battle which could decide the fate of a world caused Maou to feel very uneasy.

However, to Maou’s surprise, other than himself, no one else was against Chiho going to Ente Isla, they even welcomed her.

“I’ve always wanted to bring Chiho-chan to Ente Isla at least once!”

“That’s right. By all means, Chiho-dono, please visit our hometown.”

“If time permits~~ please come to Saint Aire Empire too~~”

-- So Emi, Suzuno, and Emerada had enthusiastically agreed.

“There’s nothing bad about it. Other than those angels, there are

no factions which would be a danger to Sasaki-san, as long as she does not stray too far away from the Demon Fortress, the Malebranches and us can protect her.”

“It should be fine, right? Sasaki Chiho is not an idiot, if we tell her not to go anywhere dangerous, she should know how to restrain herself.”

Ashiya and Urushihara did not object either.

In fact, after bringing Chiho to Ente Isla, perhaps because Emerada had made arrangements beforehand, Heather Lumark would always send someone to stay by Chiho’s side. And although Maou did not know the reason, before he had given any orders, Farfarello had proactively expressed that he was willing to be Chiho’s bodyguard. Everyone was actively trying to protect Chiho, to the point which she felt bad about it. So in the end, Maou’s worries were groundless.

Because Emi could not declare her status while she was there, she would normally move around with Chiho. With this kind of line up, forget about impregnable fortresses, this was almost at the level of a nuclear shelter.

Just like how she went to Room 201 in the past, handling this familiar task with ease, Chiho would head to the foreign world after school, bringing gifts of appreciation with her, chatting with the demons and humans whom she had slowly grown familiar with, and return to Sasazuka at a time which was not considered too late; that was the kind of journey she had already done a few times.

In comparison, with regards to this, Maou was faced with more serious problems.

Just as Suzuno said, it was “a forty-minute journey one way.”

This imposed a significant burden on Maou’s current lifestyle.

“I should go back there today... I leave work at 6 after all... ah, but after returning from the bath, it might be almost 9.”

Emi lived alone in Eifuku.

Suzuno also lived alone in Room 202.

However, Maou had lived together with Ashiya since the beginning.

During their early phases of staying in Japan, Maou and Ashiya had divided their tasks, concentrating on working and housework respectively, and Ashiya had fulfilled his responsibilities perfectly.

However, Ashiya had to command the demons and Hakin Knight Troops in Ente Isla now, and the base of their daily lives had moved to Ente Isla. Therefore, if Maou wanted to continue enjoying his abilities in doing housework, other than returning to the apartment after work, he needed to travel through the “Gate” for forty minutes.

As for why he had to return home before using the “Gate,” it was simply because he might be seen by others if he used it on the streets of Sasazuka where there were many people he knew, but Maou’s work schedule was also extremely harsh.

The MgRonalds in front of the Hatagaya station where Maou worked was a five to six minute bicycle ride, or a fifteen minute walk, away from Villa Rosa Sasazuka, and Maou’s work schedule was planned around this.

That was why he could accomplish the magnificent feat of working until closing time one day and reporting to work at opening time the next day.

However, if the travel-time of forty minutes was added in, this schedule would immediately become very harsh.

If Maou stayed in the store until closing time, the earliest he could return to the apartment was at 12:40 am.

After taking the “Gate” to go to Ente Isla, it would be 1:20 am in Japan.

After that, if he wanted to eat supper and so on, he would only sleep at 2 am.

Then if he had to start working when the store opened, the latest time Maou had to be in the store would be 6:30 am.

With this, it would become a situation of sleeping at 2 am and having to wake up at 5 am, otherwise he would have no time to eat breakfast or slowly go through the “Gate.”

In addition, without considering the fact of whether Maou was a human of the old world or not, he was a demon even now, so unlike Chiho and Rika, he was unable to use the Angel Feather Pen.

If going through the “Gate” with an Angel Feather Pen was equivalent to taking the Shinkansen, then Maou, using a “spell” to go through the “Gate,” would be like travelling the same distance on the expressway with a minivan which was close to breaking down.

Because Maou could not doze off when casting a spell, considering his work schedule, he was truly unable to return to Ente Isla.

With this, even if he wanted to eat supper, he could only buy an employee meal at MgRonalds, buy it at a convenience store which was still open late at night, or cook it himself using the few cooking utensils that had not been brought over to Ente Isla.

“The amount of clothes that need to be washed are piling up. Damn it, it’s a waste of money, but I have no choice but to go to a laundromat.”

Maou looked at the accumulated pile of clothes which were waiting to be washed and the time, and quickly recalled how much money he had left in his wallet.

The negative effects of Ashiya not being around was not limited to the three meals and amount of sleep.

All the household chores had come to a standstill.

Maou had originally planned to do as much housework as he

could, but because he had to prioritize work and the matters at Ente Isla, a thin layer of dust had formed on the corners of the kitchen's wooden floor, the washroom floor, and the window frames.

If he worked full day work shifts for consecutive days, it would be difficult to hang out the clothes to dry during the day, so on multiple occasions, Maou had used the dryer in the laundromat to dry the clothes which had piled up.

When Maou first had arrived in Japan, he was keenly aware that this was a very wasteful act; he even dreamt that once he inserted a 100 yen coin into the dryer, he would hear Ashiya complaining.

The blade of his sworn enemy, Emi, had turned dull, humans and angels were no longer a threat. Even if the current Demon King Satan was not without demonic magic unlike before, and was in a peaceful and perfectly stable situation, at present, the human man known as Maou Sadao was forced to experience an unprecedented inconvenient situation.

At this kind of time, where was Chiho, the one who would normally help Maou by bringing food over or doing housework?

In fact, in the early stages of the operation, Chiho had changed her habits, only coming over to Room 201 when she needed to use the "Gate."

Of course, the reason was because Maou had truly become "a man who lived alone."

Even if Chiho's purpose for frequently coming to Room 201 was based on her feelings for Maou, she only started doing so after Urushihara and Suzuno started to live at the apartment.

This was just consequential, but to Chiho, not only was Room 201 Maou's home, it was also "the gathering place of her friends;" this was the proper reason behind her frequent visits to this place.

Once Maou truly began living on his own, the situation changed.

Until now, despite there being only males in Room 201, Suzuno

was always in Room 202, where she could clearly hear everything that happened there.

However, currently it was not just Room 201, most of the time, Maou would be the only person in the whole apartment.

Phrasing it more clearly, based on society's standards, a high school girl wearing a school uniform frequently entering and leaving the room of a working male living in an old apartment was a situation which would not be favorably looked upon.

In fact, Chiho had been lectured about this from the point of view of Japan's standards.

Maou, who was unable to stop Chiho from going to Ente Isla, added on conditions as if he was protesting this: the condition was not allowing any situation where Maou and Chiho were the only ones in Room 201.

When Chiho used the "Gate," if she was setting off from Villa Rosa Sasazuka, she had to go together with Suzuno or Emi, if the two of them did not have any time, she would have to leave from her room in her house.

Those people around Maou and Chiho who knew them very well felt that setting this limitation at this time was rather meaningless, but Maou refused to back down on this, and Chiho also agreed to this condition without protest.

"It's necessary to draw the line after all."

Truth be told, the reason Maou felt guilty after seeing that honest smile was probably because he still had not drawn that "line" with regards to the matter which he should have replied to long ago.

Even so, it was not as if Ashiya, Urushihara, Suzuno, Nord, and Lailah did not at all return.

Ashiya's responsibilities in Ente Isla meant that he could not so easily return, but Suzuno would return every two to three days, taking turns with Urushihara, to take care of the vegetable garden

in the backyard which appeared at an unknown time.

Emi had already reduced her shifts, but as she was already considered one of the more important employees at the McDonalds in front of Hatagaya Station, she needed to work full day shifts, so when she needed someone to take care of Alas=Ramus, Suzuno or Nord would come back.

But even so, the amount of days where his only opportunity to talk to other people was at work were much greater than before, this caused Maou to realize the kindness of the people he knew during this period of time.

Anyway, after experiencing the life of living alone which was more quiet and consistent compared to before, the morning one month later—

“Maou! Maou! Hey!”

“.....”

The emotionless sound of knocking on the door came from outside the porch, causing Maou to frown in irritation.

“You’re going to participate in the training from this afternoon, right!? What time does it start!?”

“...I’m going to be in the store until the end of lunch period, so I’ll only leave at one.”

Maou mumbled as if he was talking to himself, but the noisy existence outside still heard it clearly with her acute sense of hearing.

“Alright! Then I’ll be able to make it in time if I ask Mikitty to eat lunch earlier! I’m going to eat at the new all-you-can-eat buffet restaurant today.”

“...That’s great...”

“Bye!”

The presence outside did not even see Maou’s distorted

expression, leaving noisily.

“I don’t know who came up with this Yadorigi system for the Sephirah, but I really want to hit him.”

For many reasons, only one person remained by Maou’s side as usual, that would be the existence who did not know the meaning of “courtesy” and “being considerate” to Maou, Acies=Ara.

Once Maou tried to imagine Acies' leisurely smile as she harbored great expectations towards the new restaurant, his logically empty stomach felt strangely heavy.

After working at the McGonalds in front of Hatagaya station until one in the afternoon, Maou took to Keio New Line from Hatagaya to Shinjuku.

On the way to the location for the full-timer promotion training, Maou struck a conversation with Acies who was in a merged state.

“So how was the new all-you-can-eat buffet restaurant?”

『Eh? You’re willing to bring me there again?』

Until now, Maou still could not get used to Acies' random logic, and the one who brought her there before was Shiba Miki, the landlady of Villa Rosa Sasazuka, how did it change to Maou having to bring her there “again?”

“.....”

『I’m joking! I was joking! Maou! You shouldn’t be this stressed!』

Perhaps she sensed that Maou, not being in his best mental state, was getting impatient, Acies spoke up earlier than usual, saying something to salvage the situation, though it could not be considered as such.

Acies definitely contributed a lot to the reasons for Maou to be this stressed.

Not only was Acies a glutton, she was also impolite in every manner toward Maou. She did not hide how shameless she was, and her movements were unpredictable.

Acies was Alas=Ramus' younger sister, so initiating the Battle to Defeat God to fulfill Alas=Ramus' wish was also beneficial to Acies.

However, being in a bad mood these few days, Maou started to think that if the one who rode the golden apple and descended into the apartment's backyard was Acies, forget about Lailah's request, even a parent-child relationship would not have been formed.

Maou realized once again that these two were sisters who, besides their appearance, had nothing in common.

『Let me think, that was a store which specialized in meat. 』

“A buffet restaurant which specializes in meat, did you actually go to a yakiniku store during day time?”

As Acies was in a merged state, her voice could only be heard within Maou's mind, and the people around them could not hear it.

However, Maou had to open his mouth and speak to accurately convey what he wanted to say to Acies, so from the point of view of a bystander, this would probably portray a dangerous scene of a young man wearing a suit repeatedly talking to himself in a place where there was no one else.

In addition, as the expression on Maou's face had been rather gloomy recently, if he did not hold his phone against his ear and pretend that he was speaking on the phone, it would not just stop at someone calling the police, he might even get arrested.

『Oh my. I ate too much before, so the nearby yakiniku buffet restaurants have banned me.』

Maou did not know about this, but Ooguro Amane, Shiba's niece who would normally help to take care of Acies, had brought Acies to buffets and witnessed the scene of the “shop manager calling for a halt,” something which would only happen in the Big Eater

television programs.

If Acies ate like that in yakiniku restaurants, there was nothing they could do about it if she was banned from entering.

『Their main dishes were teppanyaki burger and steak, but by paying extra, there was a buffet with drinks, salad, soup, curry, and dessert. 』

“Putting aside the drinks and soups for now, including salad, curry, and dessert seems rather excessive. Do they offer rice?”

『Of course! The rice was in the buffet as well.』

“Oh, do you remember the name of the store?”

『Name of the store? What was it again? It’s probably Big Guy or Giant Boy... but why are you suddenly asking this? You would normally say that I eat too much, have no restraint, or that it’s a waste of money. 』

“Hm, something came up.”

After Maou said this into the phone he had next to his ear, he began to search for the store using the information Acies provided.

Using part of the store name which Acies remembered and free flow of curry as keywords, Maou found the name of a restaurant chain.

“This, huh. An all-you-can-eat buffet where you can enjoy the drink bar, salad, soup of the day, curry, and dessert by paying a little more. Such a waste. The price is very attractive, but it’s more like a family restaurant.”

『What are you talking about? 』

“The people who are taking part in the full-timer promotion training were recently thinking of organizing a social gathering. No dates have been fixed yet, but everyone is suggesting the restaurants they like. So I’m looking for restaurants I can use.”

『Uwah, what’s this, it feels like a lot of trouble. 』

For reasons unknown, Acies said this with a disgusted tone.

『It's that, right? Having to pour beer for the boss and listen to his lectures, and after being bossed around by an incapable colleague who only knows how to suck up to the boss, you are forced to drink until you're dead drunk even though you have low tolerance for alcohol, then getting scorned the next day with "young people nowadays are useless," the important part is you don't get paid for it, isn't that just wasting your life? 』

“Where do you even learn all of this from?”

It felt as if Maou's steps had turned heavy, he shook his head and said, “You don't understand the situation, so don't say these things which sound like something Urushihara would say. Who knows, it might end up being useful in the future. Based on the situation, I might end up being converted to full-time employment together with some of these people, so unless I want to intentionally distance myself from them, there's nothing to lose by attending a gathering or drinking party.”

『That's what you say, but you can't get motivated, right? 』

“.....I can't deny that.”

In a rare moment, Maou displayed a negative attitude towards work related matters.

It was not to the point of mind reading, but Maou knew that when Acies was merged with him she could read his feelings to a certain extent.

“It may be full-timer promotion training, but everyone's situation is different. Some people are like me, responsible for handling the customers in the branch stores, but there are people from the hamburger bun processing factories, or people who have changed careers. The promotion training also includes going to newly opened branch stores to participate in the training for new hires. Taking part in the store-based training is not useful to me, but I still think that drinking with them at least once is good.”

『Hmm.』

“I do want to hear things about the processing factories and other industries. One of the trainees was even in the Self-Defense Forces before. He’s young still, but I’m a little interested in his life history..... but the social gathering this time feels a little different from usual.”

『What do you mean? 』

“The one who suggested the gathering was a 20-year-old man, and the area he’s from is different from the store in front of Hatagaya station. And how should I put this, that guy is acting too obviously.”

『What? It’s rare to hear you speak so vaguely. 』

“Haah, he is a rather motivated person. Not only does he have a strong desire to improve, he also participates actively in group discussions. That guy wants to lead everyone whenever he gets an opportunity to do so. Not that many training sessions have been organized and the people participating in them change quite frequently, yet he suggested to organize a gathering. I don’t know how to describe it, should I say that his actual ability doesn’t match up, or that he’s not as great as he claims when he’s doing actual work?”

In addition, he had another problem, and that was the fact that he liked to act like he was the senior although his work ability was average.

In fact, this kind of personality caused the others to dislike him, and Maou had to admit that he was not good at dealing with people like this.

Even so, the troublesome part was that he was not totally incompetent at work.

Kisaki Mayumi, the supervisor Maou respected, once said that the ability to fight on the front line was not the only thing which full-time employees needed to possess.

In reality, that person did work hard to try to gather these people who came from different places and establish some kind of order, and as the size of the organization increased, so did the demand for such skills.

『Isn't that good? You also understand why he did this, right?』

“The context is that this guy's goal is really to foster better relations.”

『Huh? 』

“In our group, there is a very cute girl. You probably saw her a few times.....”

『Huh? Maou found another sacrifice?』

“.....”

『.....Your reaction is so boring.』

Because Maou did not react at all, Acies mumbled in a bored tone, 『It's that person right. The girl called Kusunoki or Masashige.』

“It's Kusuda-san.”

Acies knew the people involved in Maou's full-timer promotion training because she was merged with Maou when he was participating in it.

“The organizer guy obviously wants to foster closer relationships with Kusuda-san. During the group activities, he would always stick with Kusuda-san.”

『Simply put, that organizer guy, called Ashikaga or Godaigo likes Kusuda?』

“.....It's Nitsuta. Don't force yourself to guess the name if you can't remember it.”

Maou suddenly became curious about what Acies was reading or watching when she was at Shiba's house.

『Nitsuta has bad judgement. Kusuda is just acting like a good girl!

On the surface, she appears to be a mature good girl who is similar to Chiho, but she's just good at manipulating men. I heard Kusuda talking bad about other people in the washroom of the training center before. Chiho would definitely not do this.』

“Hey, what do you mean by washroom in the training center?”

Acies revealed so many things, giving Maou a shock.

『When you went to your second training session, didn't you complain that you could not focus because I was too noisy, so you separated with me, gave me pocket money and asked me to look for things to eat outside? At that time, I strolled around the training center.....』

“What the heck were you doing?”

Maou remembered that such a thing happened before, but the place Maou went to that day was the building where he participated in the McGonalds Barista training, with the higher levels now being used as an interview venue for the full-timer promotion training.

In a commercial building where only working adults wearing suits enter and leave, if a girl of middle school age with silver hair and purple eyes wearing casual clothing suddenly appeared and started wandering around, she would probably attract a lot of attention.

“Haah, anyway, because of it, I can't get motivated. It feels like I have been strategically made use of.”

『This kind of thing is necessary. Unless you intentionally want to distance yourself from them.』

“.....That's right.”

Acies turned the tables on Maou, and the latter shrugged in response.

『But, Maou.』

“Hm?”

『Actually complaining to me about this kind of thing, it looks like

you're really not coping well.』

“.....!”

Maou stopped walking on reflex.

There was a huge crowd at the west exit of Shinjuku station in the morning, and while the pedestrians looked towards Maou in irritation when he suddenly stopped walking, they still quietly changed their route to walk past him.

『Recently, Emi and Chiho rarely come over to the apartment, and Ashiya, Lucifer, and Suzuno rarely come home, but are you that lonely?』

Was he so weak that Acies could say such things?

No, did he show his weak side as if it was such a natural thing to do?

In fact, did he really become mentally weak because of such things?

During the period around New Year, huge changes had occurred in Maou's environment.

Things which had naturally existed around him had disappeared.

However, just as Acies said, those things were not exterminated.

Maou would normally see Emi and Chiho in the store, Urushihara and Suzuno would come back regularly, and not only did Maou contact Ashiya privately, he had also returned to Ente Isla before.

In fact, he had been in this situation for only one month.

However, Maou had never expected that he would end up having Acies commenting on his work and feelings.

“.....Haah.”

『Yeah.』

“Honestly speaking, I'm tired of eating out.”

Maou used all his effort to put up a brave front, and as if she felt happy, Acies laughed, 『You're not being honest at all.』

The changes which happened around New Year were so insignificant when compared to the situation Emi faced when she fled to Japan after the battle that even comparing these two was stupid.

However, whether it was good or bad, changes in the environment would cause stress to “humans.”

Maou set the deadline for the Battle to Defeat God to before Alas=Ramus' birthday.

In other words, it was mid-July this year.

One month had passed since New Year, so it was already early February.

Based on Maou's schedule, they were going to start the final battle in less than five months.

He might have said this, but Maou and the others had not even found one item of the Ancient Demon King Satan's Legacy, and even if they did successfully attack Heaven, there were still many enemies they had to defeat, and they did not even know what kind of battles they would face.

Even so, Maou still promised his “daughter” that the present she could not receive during Christmas would be her birthday present.

The battle to keep such a promise had not even begun, how could he become mentally weak now?

『You have no right to be a Demon King, huh.』

“Don't make it sound like you have seen through my thoughts.”

Maou started walking.

“But I admit that I am a little too depressed. Sorry about that.”

『I'm not depressed, Mikitty always treats me to delicious food, so I

don't feel tired of eating out at all. It's just that.....』

“Hm?”

『Aren't you taking this too lightly?』

“Too lightly?”

『That's right. I know everyone is working hard in Ente Isla, and Maou and Emi are on standby here, but no one can guarantee that the angels would really do nothing.』

“That makes sense.....”

『Mikitty and Amane may be very strong, but those angels can avoid their surveillance and act sneakily. Those stinky thieves.』

After knowing the truth, Maou realized that Acies' assessments about Heaven were mostly true, which was perplexing.

『Especially since Suzuno rarely comes back. Did all of you really think about Chiho's safety properly? Gabriel can't be trusted at all!』

“That's no need to worry about that. I have already conferred with Gabriel in detail about the alarm web set up around Chi-chan's home. If a source of holy magic or demonic magic, definitely not present within any Earthling, approaches Chi-chan's home or the area around Sasahata High School, and Chi-chan is within that range, a sonar will be transmitted outwards in a radius of two kilometers, informing everyone about the unusual situation. Emi, Amane-san, and I will definitely stay within that range, so once we detect that something is amiss, we can rush to her side immediately.”

『A sonar transmission with a radius of two kilometres? Wouldn't that disturb the neighbors?』

“Normal people cannot hear it, so there are no problems. It's actually something like a barrier, and since it's a sonar for notification purposes, Chi-chan will only feel some ringing in her ears if she does hear it. We instructed Chiho that if she needed to go

to other places, she has to contact me, Emi, Suzuno, or Amane-san.”

『.....I see.』

“What’s wrong, are you dissatisfied about something?”

Maou asked this to Acies who appeared to still harbor some doubts, and the latter spoke in a more dissatisfied tone, 『Nothing, it’s fine as long as Maou and Chiho thinks it’s good.』

The way Acies phrased it was rather annoying.

『Chiho thinks that it’s alright?』

“She did say she felt reassured if it was like this.”

『Ah, there’s no hope.』

“What was that!”

『I meant that literally. We’re almost at our destination, right? I ate until I was very full today, so I will quietly take a nap from now on, you don’t have to worry. Good night. 』

“Ah, hey, Acies! What did you mean by that just now..... hey, she really fell asleep.”

Maou, who felt that Acies had fallen asleep, folded his phone which was not communicating with anyone, and sighed deeply.

“...What is this?”

Even if Acies did not say it, Maou also knew.

He understood it well.

Lailah and Ashiya had reminded him, and Suzuno had scolded him a few times.

Most importantly, Chiho had said it to him again.

Because he did not know how to answer, all the actions Maou took towards Chiho were ambiguous and unclear.

No, he did not even know whether such actions were considered unclear.

Using the situation just now as an example: to ensure Chiho's safety, there were not many actions Maou could actively take.

At most, he could be the first one to rush over when abnormal situations occur, but Maou knew that what Acies wanted to say was not this; to expound it further, the fact that Acies was saying this angered and frustrated him.

“Even if she said such a thing, I don't know what to do...”

The moment when Chiho confessed the first time, Maou may have shown a calm composure under the heat of summer, but he was actually quite shaken.

However, what Chiho conveyed, was a deep feeling of attraction.

A young man and woman walked past Maou, holding hands.

The two of them must be a “couple,” and this situation could only be described as “date in progress.”

Maou thought about it before, whether what Chiho asked for was to be able to do such things with him.

However, he denied this line of thought in these past few months.

Chiho would not be satisfied with just building an intimate relationship with Maou.

Of course, it was not as if she had no such intentions at all, but if Chiho's wish was only just that.

“I should already have my answer.”

Just as Maou mumbled to himself and walked through the front doors of the target building—

“Ah, Maou-san”

A melodious voice with intentions similar yet different from Chiho struck up a conversation with Maou, he looked up and replied, “Good morning, Kusuda-san.”

The one who ran towards him was Kusuda whom he mentioned

before, but he could not remember her first name.

“About Nitsuta-san’s suggestion, did you find any good locations?”

“...No, it’s rather difficult to find. Everyone’s coming from different locations, so it would be best to pick a restaurant near Shinjuku, but I’m not familiar with the stores in the area.”

“I thought so too. After all, the trainees don’t even have each other’s contact information yet.”

As mentioned before, the people taking part in the full-timer promotion training came from different backgrounds. In addition, as employees, they had different working schedules, so not all the trainees would be present at every training session.

In addition, the upper management did not tell everyone what the total number of participants was, so it was possible that those attending the gathering might only be those who had met Nitsuta, the organizer, a few times.

“Honestly speaking, I feel that it’s too early to organize a gathering.”

“But I feel that it’s good to have such an opportunity.”

“That might be true, but if everyone attends the training together or work together for a period of time, their relationship would naturally become better. However, Nitsuta-san is approaching it with a frivolous attitude, using something like a university welcoming party to force everyone to foster better relations, I really can’t approve of it. Plus, he’s always bothering me.”

Nitsuta, you have been seen through.

Not knowing whether Nitsuta was going to attend the training today or not, Maou mentally mourned for the event organizer.

“Ah, oh yes, Maou-san. Now is a good chance, I want to give you this.”

“Hm?”

After Maou saw what Kusuda passed to him, he became perplexed.

That thing looked like a small box which had been wrapped in cute wrapping paper and a ribbon.

“What is this?”

“Oh gosh, isn’t it obvious, of course it’s chocolate.”

“Eh? Chocolate? Oh, Valentine’s Day, huh.”

At this point, Maou finally sensed Kusuda’s intentions.

It was 7th February today. There was still some time until Valentine’s Day, but taking into account the possibility that they might not meet the other party on the actual day, taking the chance to give someone obligatory chocolate now was not strange at all.

“Can I accept this?”

“It’s alright, don’t be shy. Ah, but I haven’t given any to Nitsuta-san yet, so please don’t tell anyone.”

Nitsuta really was too pitiful.

“Thanks a lot, then. I’ll accept it.”

In some sense, obligatory chocolate on Valentine’s Day was like a social gathering, it was a way to foster better relationships with others.

Maou did not think that he would end up liking Kusuda because of this, but if Kawada found out, he might tell Maou things like “Go explode,” or “Be careful not to get stabbed on the streets at night.”

Since he could not confirm if he would be attending a training session around 14th March, it would be better not to mention the return gift.

“If we have a chance to meet in March, I’m looking forward to your return gift, okay.”

In the end, Kusuda brought up the topic, causing Maou to

complete the ritual for receiving obligatory chocolate.

“What are we doing for the training today?”

“I don’t know, it seems to be a meeting to discuss the plans for the free gifts.”

To switch his brain, which had become unhappy because of what Acies had said, to work mode, Maou switched the topic to the program for today.

But at this moment, Maou forgot one thing.

Because he had avoided facing this issue.

Because Shiba and Amane had helped to shoulder the burden.

Therefore, he had forgotten how insatiable Acies was when it came to food.

※

The next day, when Suzuno was weeding the homegrown vegetable garden, developed in the backyard of Villa Rosa Sasazuka after obtaining permission from the landlady, Acies squatted next to Suzuno, her eyes sparkling.

“Hey, Suzuno, when can I receive chocolates from other people?”

“Why are you suddenly talking about this?”

“It’s called Valentine’s Day, right?”

Acies had been sleeping when she was merged with Maou, but she still had acutely detected the smell of the wrapped chocolate and woke up at the same time.

Then because she wanted to know “why Maou could get chocolates from Kusuda,” she looked for Suzuno who had returned to weed the homegrown vegetable garden in the backyard to discuss about what happened yesterday.

“Oh, Valentine’s Day, is it?”

At this moment, Suzuno did not know about the storm which

would be created from this casual response.

Unfortunately, Maou had gone to work at the store in front of Hatagaya station as usual today, and Suzuno did not ask ‘why Acies suddenly wanted to know what Valentine’s Day was’.

However, expecting Suzuno to think that far was asking for too much.

After all, Suzuno had been in Ente Isla until this morning, holding holiday mass for the Saint Aire Knights who were stationed near the Demon Fortress.

“It’s unfortunate, but you are a girl, so you can’t receive any chocolate.”

“W-What did you say——?”

Suzuno’s declaration caused Acies to let out a scream as if it was the end of the world.

“How can things be this cruel...”

“It can’t be helped. Valentine’s Day is that kind of event.”

Suzuno looked towards Acies, who was kneeling with her hands on the ground with a pale devastated expression, and showed a troubled smile.

“There are many views about its origins, but many countries have established the culture that girls have to give the boys sweets. Any sweets would have been fine, but in the development of Japan’s history, it has been decided that chocolate would be given.

“Chocolate... my chocolate...”

Suzuno did not know who Acies expected to receive chocolate from, but it looked like she had not recovered from the shock.

“Why can’t girls receive them...? Can’t I start being a boy from now on...?”

“You want to become a boy so you can get free chocolate?”

Suzuno, who did not know how serious Acies was about it, showed a troubled smile and said,

“It can’t be helped. It was originally meant to be a day for girls to take the opportunity to give sweets to boys and express their feelings.”

“Eh?”

This sentence caused Acies to blink in shock.

“Don’t worry. This is a culture only in Japan, but it’s White Day on 14th March next month, where boys have to give sweets as a return gift.”

“Really!”

Acies, who suddenly became energetic, knocked her hands slowly together as if she finally understood.

“Now that you mention it, Kusuda did say that she was looking forward to Maou’s return gift in March! So that was what it meant!”

“Kusuda? Maou? Hey, Acies? Where did you hear about Valentine’s Day...?”

Maou’s name suddenly appeared together with an unfamiliar name, causing Suzuno to break out in cold sweat.

However, Acies did not hear Suzuno’s question and raised her fist in the air with raging spirits.

“Does this mean that Kusuda is actually aiming for Maou?”

“A-Acies? Let me ask a question, the Kusuda you mentioned is...”

“The girl who gave Maou chocolates in the Mags training! She acted like she was giving obligatory chocolates, but she should be serious! Or else she wouldn’t be looking forward to March!”

“What? H-Hey, Acies?”

Suzuno started to fear that she did something unsalvageable and let out a tragic sounding shout.

Acies, who had not known anything about Valentine's Day until now, was suddenly saying things like "obligatory" and being "serious," shocking Suzuno.

"I can't just sit idly by! Maou is very poor, I can't allow Kusuda to steal away Maou's White Day!"

"Acies, don't be hasty! Calm down and let's talk about it! In Japan, female employees frequently give male employees obligatory chocolate to improve the relationship between colleagues, so this is nothing special..."

"I have to tell Chiho! Recently, everyone is only treating Nee-sama well, so I want to take the chance to ask Chiho to teach me how to make chocolate to change Maou's opinion of me!"

"Wai.....!"

At this moment, Suzuno's fears became true.

Suzuno did not know what had happened between the person named Kusuda and Maou, but if Acies carelessly spread the news around, even a Japanese rice fish could grow an oarfish tail fin.

Recently, Chiho had been feeling troubled over the distance between Maou and herself, and Suzuno had a feeling that if Chiho knew that Maou had grown closer with another female because of Valentine's Day, something headache inducing would occur again, but it was too late.

"Chiho's scent is over there!"

"Wa-Wait a moment..."

When Suzuno finished her sentence, Acies had already ran away from the scene at full speed, leaving footprints as deep as a strike from a hoe.

Suzuno weakly put down her hand which grasped only air.

"I... have to... apologize to Chiho-dono and the Demon King later..."

After she said this in a shaky tone, Suzuno took out her phone

from within her belt, planning to send a message to Maou who was still clueless and focused on work, trying to patch things up a little.

“Ugh... Acies... misunderstood... the meaning of Valentine’s Day... ah.”

Suzuno brushed off the dirt on her hands and operated her phone with clumsy movements, then after noticing the time shown on the top right of the screen, she really came close to fainting.

“Oh no!”

It was just past three in the afternoon.

Suzuno roughly pulled off the handkerchief tied around her hand and ran out frantically.

“Wait, Acies! Chiho-dono is still at school!”

This place was not that far away from Sasahata High School and lagging behind a Sephirah child by one minute was already a fatal miscalculation, but Suzuno still started running with all her might to protect Chiho... however, once she left the apartment grounds, she braked and ran back into Room 202.

“A-Alas=Ramus! I can’t leave Alas=Ramus alone! Ugh! How, how did things turn out like this!”

By the time Suzuno carried Alas=Ramus on her back, who had been entrusted to her by Emi before Emi went to work and was now taking an afternoon nap, more than one minute had passed.

Suzuno knew very well that when dealing with Acies, this mistake which had cost her two minutes would result in a dire situation.

CHAPTER 2

THE HERO, FEELING PERPLEXED OVER THE DIFFERENCES FELT IN THE WORKPLACE

**THE
HERO,
FEELING
PERPLEXED
OVER THE
DIFFERENCES
FELT IN THE
WORKPLACE**



“Eh? You’re not giving any?”

“I’m not going to do such a troublesome thing.”

Within the store which had become peaceful after the lunch period, Emi looked towards the smiling face of her work senior, Ooki Akiko, in surprise.

When comparing the delivered stocks of the Manmaru chocolate pie, an event item which was reintroduced at the beginning of February, against the orders, Emi suddenly became curious about how the store in front of Hatagaya station celebrated Valentine’s Day, and asked Akiko about it.

Unexpectedly, Akiko replied that the female employees of the store in front of Hatagaya station did not make an effort to give the male employees chocolate.

“Did Saemi give them in your previous workplace?”

“It’s more like everyone was giving chocolate instead of just me giving chocolate.”

“Ah~ it must be like this because the work shifts in a call center follow a fixed pattern. However, at the store in front of Hatagaya station, the girls will not do such things together.”

Akiko said this as she placed the Manmaru chocolate pie into the heating cabinet.

“When I first entered last year, I was somewhat mentally prepared for it, yet nothing happened, so I asked Kisaki-san about it in an indirect manner.”

Shop Manager Kisaki Mayumi first explained that she did not have a good impression of “Valentine’s Day” customs, and continued, *“From the company’s point of view, I do not encourage employees to follow such customs. While I will not forbid employees from giving each other chocolate privately when they’re outside the store, it must be based on the relationship which they have in private.”*

Basically, this meant that within the workplace, it was forbidden to give people chocolate.

“Some time later, Kisasi-san would probably notify Saemi and the other girls who joined this year.”

If “joined this year” was used as the standard, then Chiho would likely be included.

“However, doing these things out of obligation is boring, isn’t it? I won’t say stupid things like wanting a return gift which costs three times the value, but we have more girls in the store which puts more burden on the guys, and for those people who do not have shifts in February and March, they will feel left out, so it’s not good for anyone. Anyway, basing on these reasons, the conclusion was to not give any.”

“I see.”

It was not called “Valentine’s Day,” but in the Western Continent of Ente Isla, there were customs where the girls would take the chance to express their feelings towards the guys.

In Emi’s hometown of Sloan, biscuits or sweet-bread would be given during the grain harvesting period, but before Emi knew about this custom, she was already involved in the battle with the Demon King Army, so she had never experienced it before.

Therefore, Emi remembered that when she learned of the “Valentine’s Day” custom at her workplace in Docodemo workplace last year, she subconsciously felt excited about it.

Incidentally, Emi only gave obligatory chocolates to her immediate shift supervisor and section supervisor, but during White Day one month later, all the female employees received Rakugan¹ from a premium Japanese snack shop as a return gift.

“Rakugan is made of fine sugar pressed into a mold, a dry snack which often appears in tea parties. How interesting.”

At that time, the small and exquisite design of the Rakugan and

their vibrant colors greatly touched Emi, and for a period of time after that, she really liked to buy Rakugan, but that is another story.

“Then again.”

“Hm?”

“Putting aside the issue of giving chocolate to the ones in the store.”

“Yeah.”

“Is there anything which made Saemi become interested in Valentine’s Day?”

“.....Ah.”

Akiko’s question was not abrupt at all.

After all, it was Emi who first brought up her interest in this topic.

Even so, Emi stopped thinking for a moment and mumbled something.

This mumble prevented her from naturally answering immediately.

Akiko sensed this moment acutely.

“Eh, could it be.”

“There’s nothing like that.”

Humans were really mysterious beings, sometimes just a short pause between breaths or a slight change in the angle of one’s gaze spoke more than a thousand words.

“Oh~ I’m a little surprised.”

“I already said there’s nothing.”

“I thought Saemi had no interest in such things.”

“Akiko-san!”

“The other party shouldn’t be in this store. You look like you’re very experienced in the work here, but you actually didn’t join that

long ago... ah, but you already knew Maou-san before that.”

“Wai...”

What was going on with this troublesome development which looked like someone was trying to mislead others when that person was not trying to do so?

Emi did not feel particularly embarrassed, rather than that, she only felt anxious, but she felt her face turning red.

Akiko was not the type of person who would irresponsibly spread this kind of thing around, but considering the recent atmosphere around her, it would be troublesome if she was grouped together with Maou.

“Oh my, we’re just discussing the topic of Valentine’s Day chocolate, there’s no need to be this embarrassed. In this current era, giving someone one or two chocolates does not mean that you like the other party.”

“I’m not embarrassed!”

However, Emi knew very well that she definitely looked as if she was feeling embarrassed.

No, could she actually be feeling embarrassed?

Akiko began to observe Emi’s reaction with a kind attitude, and the reason Emi was so swayed by Akiko was because when she heard Akiko’s question, she did think about such things for an instant.

After thinking about such things, Emi was greatly shocked by the thoughts which naturally surfaced in her mind, and this delay became a fatal mistake.

“By the way, there’s a highly recommended chocolatier near my school, should it introduce it to you?

“No need!”

“Oh my~ Saemi is so cute.”

Judging that the conversation would only enter a swamp if this continued, Emi stuffed the remaining chocolate pies into the heating cabinet and forcefully ended the topic.

Unfortunately, Maou, who had been working at the café on the second floor, choose this time to walk down the stairs.

“Why are the two of you being so noisy? If Kisaki-san was around, she’d get angry. Is the photocopy of the order sheet still around? I want to compare it with the stocks upstairs.”

“Eh, ah, al-, alright. Order sheet... ah, here.”

Emi noticed that her voice had subconsciously increased in pitch, but once she thought about the reason she paused before answering Akiko’s question, she became tense.

Not knowing if Akiko noticed this, she walked past Emi with a smile.

“Sorry, sorry, it’s just that Saemi mentioned that she had given Valentine’s Day chocolate in her previous workplace and asked me if there was such a practice here. Right?”

“T-That’s right.”

“Oh. Valentine’s Day huh... ah, as expected. They delivered one extra bag...”

Maou acted like he was not that interested in the topic and frowned after browsing through the photocopy which Emi passed to him.

For reasons unknown, Emi felt a little irritated at his side profile, but Maou looked up before Emi could speak and said, “Oh yeah, talking about Valentine’s Day, I just remembered. I received obligatory chocolate yesterday.”

“Eh?”

“Oh! Is that so?”

Emi was shocked, and Akiko was very interested.

“Yeah, then, because the two of us were not so close that we would give each other obligatory chocolate, I felt a little troubled.”

“Maou-san, if Kawacchi heard you say that, he would definitely say that your life is going too well and kill you.”

“Uh, but we only met a few times, what should I do in this situation...”

“Giving someone obligatory chocolate is just part of the atmosphere, so the person giving the chocolate normally does not expect a return gift. This does not mean that you don’t have to give a return gift, but you don’t have to force yourself.”

“Hm~ but the brand looks very expensive, have you heard of it before?”

Maou mentioned a french shop name, and although Emi had not heard of it before, Akiko reacted in surprise.

“That shop... Saemi, that’s the chocolatier I just mentioned.”

“Oh.”

“What’s that?”

“Chocolatier refers to a dessert chef who specializes in chocolate! That store opened in a residential area near my university without any fanfare, and not many people know about it even on the internet. Eh? What’s going on? Is that really obligatory chocolate? It’s rather expensive, you know?”

“I feel... that it should be obligatory chocolate. She’s one of the trainees in the training programme, and we’ve only met three times so far.”

“Hm~ it’s difficult to judge, but will someone give that as obligatory chocolate?”

Akiko’s expression was heavy, but her expression was filled with curiosity.

“How do you plan to handle this?”

“Huh?”

Emi asked this with what she felt was a stiff tone, causing Maou to frown, and after thinking over it silently for a while, he replied, “...I don’t know what to do either. Isn’t there a saying that a person must return a gift of at least half the value after receiving one? If I leave it alone, Ashiya would definitely nag a lot, but honestly speaking, I don’t know the price at all, and I don’t have a computer a home right now, and it’s a little troublesome to search for the information with my phone.”

“What do you mean by return a gift of at least half the value, it’s not as if she was giving a gift.”

Akiko was dumbfounded, and Emi spoke in dissatisfaction as if she felt it was uninteresting.

“Ignoring if it’s expensive, cheap, rare, or common, you think it’s obligatory chocolate. So just get an obligatory return gift.”

“Is that so?”

“If not, what do you plan to do?”

“Haah, it’s true that I can only do that.”

After Maou expressed his agreement with Emi’s cold judgement, Emi felt unhappy about it for some reason.

“Ah, I’m sorry. Taking up your time with such a boring issue.”

“That’s right. If Kisaki-san heard this, she’d really get angry.”

“So blunt. Then, I’m going back up.”

After Maou said this, he returned to the second floor.

Emi looked at Maou’s back in disgust, and after Akiko glanced at Emi’s side profile, she suddenly said something which pulled Emi’s awareness back to reality.

“...Does Chi-chan know about this?”

Emi quickly turned her head towards Akiko, and replied

resolutely with a terrifying expression, “She probably doesn’t!”

“I think so too. It seems Maou-san will occasionally be this airheaded. I feel that Chi-chan would be reasonable when it comes to these things, but being reasonable and personal feelings are two different things.”

If all the people around Chiho could tell that she had a crush on Maou, then it was already an open secret.

Because Chiho expressed it in such a straightforward manner, no one dared to tease her or probe too much into it, and because Chiho’s performance had been affected many times because of Maou’s negligence, Kisaki would vaguely remind Maou about it every single time.

“How should I say it? That might just be the worst bad habit of Maou-san, who appears to be perfect.”

“Yeah.”

Emi felt that Maou still had many other faults besides that, but if she said it at this time, Akiko would just interrogate her on how she knew about them, so she chose to keep quiet.

“Seeing Maou-san act like this, he will naturally tell Chi-chan later that he received obligatory chocolate and ask her what he should do.”

Emi felt that based on Maou’s behaviour so far, he might really do that.

Even so, if they carelessly made Maou keep quiet about it, perhaps it would hurt Chiho’s pride instead, however if they told Chiho about it beforehand, it might just make her worry unnecessarily.

On the contrary, because Ashiya and Suzuno had lectured Maou many times, Emi believed that even if it was Maou, he might not discuss it with Chiho.

“.....”

At this point in her thoughts, Emi started to imagine strange things again.

That would be that although Maou had received obligatory chocolate, he was unable to discuss it with Chiho. However, feeling guilty about hiding things from Chiho, he had started to act strangely in front of her, and was seen through in the end.

As a friend, Emi did not want to see Chiho feeling sad.

Using this situation as an example, if Emi did not remind Maou about it, his dense actions might hurt Chiho again.

However, if Emi's interference was discovered, it might hurt Chiho, too. This made it difficult for Emi to take action.

Akiko knew about the relationship between Maou and Chiho but did not know the details and the sense of distance between them, so even if she acted according to her personality and warned Maou about it, it would not have much effect.

“...Why do I have to worry so much about the Demon King's private life?”

Feeling frustrated by her thoughts, which were circling around like the rotary blades on a helicopter, Emi shifted her thoughts to why she paused when answering Akiko earlier, not knowing why she did so.

It was something which she did not have to think about in the first place.

『What kind of chocolate does Maou like?』

Because such a ridiculous thought entered her brain, Emi was burdened with more trouble.

In fact, Maou and her currently did not have any time to deal with such a frivolous activity.

After all, the Battle to Defeat God was imminent.

Why did she have to feel this troubled about a festive activity in

Japan, and in such a pathetic manner as well?

There should be many other things to think about.

To break free from her spinning thoughts, Emi looked toward the door of the shop.

““.....””

Akiko also saw “that” at the same time, and the two of them showed the same expression of irritation.

The shop manager of the Sentucky Fried Chicken Hatagaya branch opposite them, Mitsuki Sarue, happened to walk past the door of the shop.

His gaze as he sneakily glanced at the MgRonalds Hatagaya branch was as pure as a child who harbored a great dream which was impossible to fulfil, and just seeing that gaze, Emi and Akiko understood that he had excessive expectations for Valentine’s Day.

Considering the time, Sariel did not enter the store, but Emi and Akiko looked at each other.

“...Akiko-san, may I ask what should be done if a situation occurs later?”

“...I heard that Kisaki-san won’t be coming to the store on the 14th.”

“...Eh, so he won’t do anything rash?”

“...Nothing bad has happened so far, but if something really happens, we can only call the police.”

Regardless of how great or tragic their past was, Maou and Sarue were currently Demon King and archangel.

If he knew that the two of them were feeling troubled over something as trivial as Valentine’s Day, the Ancient Great Demon King Satan would probably be crying in the other world, and “the God” Ignora, the leader of the angels who had not shown her face so far, might just abandon her own ambitions because of the stupidity

of it all.

Emi was thinking such meaningless thoughts.

“Is it worth being so concerned about it?”

“Those who are concerned would naturally feel concerned about it.”

Whether male or female, they had no choice but to pay attention to Valentine’s Day, Emi started to feel confused about the country known as Japan.

Emi had never heard Chiho mention it, but if Chiho was looking forward to Valentine’s Day, Emi could only hope that Chiho would not feel too excited or troubled by it.

However—

Emi’s imaginary wish had already been shattered in a place where she and Maou could not intervene.

“Maou-san received chocolates?”

“That’s right! That chocolate looked really expensive! And the person is a lady with above average looks! Chiho, this is a huge problem! You can’t let your guard down!”

At almost the same time, Chiho was in front of the main gates of Sasahata High School, her eyes widening because of Acies’ emergency report.

“I didn’t make it...”

In addition, after seeing Suzuno, who was kneeling on the ground while carrying the sleeping Alas=Ramus, covered in sweat after chasing Acies, Chiho got another shock.

Then—

“Sasachi, you...”

Unfortunately, Chiho was not the only person to have heard Acies’

emergency report.

“Don’t tell me you haven’t settled things yet?”

Shouji Kaori, who had left school with Chiho, also heard this piece of news.

Chiho later mentioned that the expression of despair Suzuno showed in that instant was really miserable.

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After Kamazuki Suzuno knew the truth, within her heart, she still believed that there were kind gods, and her belief in the gods still existed.

Therefore, Suzuno honestly confessed to the gods within her heart, hoping that they could forgive her past actions.

“What? Sasachi has finally given up?”

“It’s not like that.”

“However, Chiho knows that Maou gets easily led around by others, right?”

“Erm... yeah... that’s true.”

For unknown reasons, Suzuno was in the Sentucky Hatagaya store together with Chiho, Acies, and Chiho’s classmate — a young lady known as Shouji Kaori.

“Sasachi mentioned it before, right? Compared to yourself, the other party has more freedom. Maou-san is busy with his training and after converting to full-time employeeship, he will probably meet more kinds of people, right? If Sasachi, who is a student, continues to drag it out, the situation could really become unsalvageable.”

“But, the both of us had accepted what happened during Christmas.”

“Chiho is too naïve! Kaori is correct! Even if the time hasn’t

arrived yet, as long as Ashiya is around, there is a limit to the return gifts Maou can acquire! You should take action immediately!”

“Even if you ask me to take action...”

Carrying Alas=Ramus, Suzuno flinched as she sat next to Chiho. Acies and Kaori were meeting for the first time, yet they were able to get along and interrogate Chiho in front of Suzuno.

“Acies is right! Since Sasachi can cook, then you should make chocolates and launch an attack on Maou-san, taking the chance to hasten his answer! Ambush him after work or at other times! If it’s Valentine’s Day, it’s alright as long as you give them to him around the 14th!”

“Handmade huh, but I rarely make desserts.”

“Eh? Chiho doesn’t know how to make desserts? I was so expectant too!”

“It’s not like I don’t know how to do it at all, but I have never done it seriously.”

“It’s fine even with cheap snacks or senbei from the convenience store! You’ve already missed a lot of festivals, you must celebrate this one properly! Use gifts to put pressure on him!”

“Yeah!”

“Stand up, stand up, Chiho! Let’s snatch Maou’s return gift together!”

“Treating the return gift as the goal is not good.”

“...Hah...”

Shouji Kaori did not know about Ente Isla. Hugging Alas=Ramus with a stiff expression, Suzuno cast a sideways glance at Acies, not knowing whether she was scheming or hiding things, and broke out in cold sweat.

In the past, Suzuno had caused Emi to face the same situation in this store.

She had used Emi's friend, making use of the curiosity of Suzuki Rika, who did not know anything at that time, to find out more about the relationship between Emi and Maou.



In the end, a disaster was avoided thanks to Ashiya's interference, but at that time, Emi saw Suzuno as a stranger of unknown origins to Emi, so Emi must have been afraid of Rika finding out about Ente Isla.

Suzuno felt that she was currently paying a price for that time.

Kaori did not know anything about Ente Isla.

However, she had a very close relationship with Chiho, and from how she easily accepted Acies and Alas=Ramus, who were more unique in appearance, and Suzuno, so Chiho must have told her everything but the matters pertaining to Ente Isla.

This was alright because this was the result of Chiho's judgement, but the problem laid with Acies.

Suzuno could not expect Acies to be as wise as Ashiya, and because the two of them were close in age, they got along quickly. Because of this, Suzuno could not predict whether Acies would say anything strange that would raise Kaori's suspicion.

In addition, the shop manager of this store was still Saniel, and considering his usual behavior, if they talked about Valentine's Day here, they would probably cause a lot of trouble to Chiho, Emi, Maou, and the employees of Sentucky and MgRonalds. Problems like this also caused Suzuno to feel uneasy.

Chiho should be in the same mental state, yet unexpectedly, she managed to naturally dodge Acies and Kaori's questioning.

Suzuno had chased Acies to this place because she was worried that Chiho would get hurt because of Maou's lack of thoughtfulness, but right now, she just wanted to get out of this situation as quickly as possible.

"Then again, from Suzuno-san's point of view, what kind of person is Maou-san, actually?"

"Eh?"

Kaori suddenly asked Suzuno a question, causing the latter to get a shock.

“W-What kind of person... refers to?”

“Is he the type of person who would feel very happy to receive handmade chocolate?”

“Oh, I see, I’m not sure. As long as it’s food, he should be very happy, ah, that’s not right.”

After saying this, Suzuno realized that this was not what Kaori wanted to ask.

“Basically, he should not be someone who is unable to appreciate feelings conveyed to him...”

However, this answer did not satisfy Kaori.

“If it’s like that, then Sasachi has already given him food many times, right? All of dishes should have Sasachi’s feelings incorporated within.”

Strangely, Suzuno felt as if she had just been reprimanded.

Maou would express his gratitude properly every time he received the food, but this kind of answer would probably not appease Kaori.

Chiho seemed to understand this as well.

“I did not make those dishes for such a purpose, I simply wanted to eat together with everyone.”

Rather than justifying Maou’s actions, it was more like Chiho was coming to Suzuno’s rescue.

“But it’s not completely unrelated to Maou-san, right!”

“If you put it that way, it’s not wrong either.”

It was just consequential, but the reason Chiho delivered dishes to Maou’s home was related to Suzuno, so it was really difficult for her to comment on this.

To weaken the powers of Maou and the rest, Suzuno gave them

ingredients and dishes which had been blessed, and Chiho gave dishes to Maou and the others to fight against Suzuno. After some ups and downs, Suzuno began teaching Chiho how to cook, and Chiho taught Suzuno about the dishes of Japan and Earth.

This experience caused Suzuno to once again understand Chiho's feelings towards Maou, so even if her current feelings were a little complicated, her position was gradually shifting to privately rooting for Chiho.

“I...”

“Hm?”

“...Recently feel that I have been a little too selfish.”

“Eh?”

“Perhaps it was a rebound from being too obedient, I'm not good at expressing my own feelings. Thinking back on things now, I have really caused Kao, Suzuno-san, and Acies a lot of trouble.”

“Hm? When did you cause trouble for me?”

“I did.”

Acies had no impression of it, but the night Rika confessed to Ashiya and failed, the words Acies had said to Chiho when they met by coincidence within Sasazuka station had definitely become the reason which spurred Chiho's heart to move forward.

『You have to convey your own feelings when you can still do so.』

Her feelings had already been conveyed long ago.

Currently, through her actions, she was also expressing that her feelings have not changed.

What was left was just believing and waiting.

“I don't plan to pressure him before July comes.”

“Huh? July? What kind of strange date is that?”

“You want to delay Valentine's Day until July?”

Only Acies' thinking jumped into the next dimension, but Suzuno clearly knew the significance of July and could not help but look at Alas=Ramus, who was leaning heavily against her and sleeping.

July's Obon.

That was Alas=Ramus' birthday and also the deadline Maou set for the Battle to Defeat God.

To Maou, fighting Ignora was just a side quest, all of this was to give Alas=Ramus the best birthday present. This was the most important goal, and Chiho truly agreed with this.

“Honestly, I’m troubled over whether I should celebrate Valentine’s Day.”

““Huh?””

Kaori and Acies rebutted at the same time.

“Actually troubling over whether to celebrate it or not, are you serious, Sasachi?”

“Chiho, are you still mentally sound? If you don’t give chocolate, you won’t get a return gift, you know?”

The directions they took their rebukes were completely different, but Chiho raised both her hands to calm the two of them down.

“No, I will probably still do something. But, Suzuno-san.”

“Hm?”

“Have you met Maou-san at the apartment recently?”

“Yeah, I met him when he went to work this morning.”

“Maou-san has been looking a little fatigued recently, is he like that at the apartment too?”

“I’m not sure, even if we meet, we only greet each other.”

In the end, Suzuno’s schedule was adjusted to match Emi’s, and when she occasionally returned to Sasazuka Room 202, she did not meet Maou that often.

However, Acies answered this question,

“Maou is very tired, he said he’s already sick of eating out.”

“Eh? Sick of eating out?”

Chiho thought about the meaning within Acies' words and seemed to think of something immediately.

“Ah... I see. Because Ashiya-san isn’t here, no one is around to make supper and breakfast for him. So it’s like that.”

“Chi, Chiho-dono?”

“Hm~ it’ll still be possible if it’s day time, but recently, Maou-san’s shifts end at closing time, I don’t know when he will reach home after the training session ends, making it inconvenient to look for him, even if I ask Yusa-san to pass it to him, I have to choose dates when both their schedules overlap.”

“Hey, Sasachi?”

“Hm~ Kao, Suzuno-san, Acies,” Chiho said nonchalantly. “What do you think about giving Maou-san freeze dried miso soup sets for Valentine’s Day?”

“““ ””””

The expressions of Suzuno, Acies and Kaori — especially Kaori — said it all.

Chiho was acting strange today.

“...Seriously?”

“Eh? I was rather serious.”

“Do you think it’s a New Year’s gift!?”

“Eh~ but even if I make chocolates by hand, buying branded chocolate does cost quite a bit, since I have to spend money anyway, wouldn’t it be better to buy something the other party really needs?”

“Hey, Suzuno. I feel this is different from what I perceive about

Valentine's Day.”

“I’m surprised that you know the word ‘perceive,’ but I agree with what you said.”

“I say, Sasachi, you can do that on a normal basis, but doing this is no different from giving your cooking to Maou, which you were doing before. Hey? You have to give chocolate during Valentine’s Day, right!? There’s some flexibility, but you should give dessert!”

“I know that. I actually know that very well.”

After that, Chiho’s shoulders sagged a bit, and she sighed.

“I didn’t tell you guys, but I did pressure Maou-san a little for an answer.”

““Eh?””

“Ohh?”

Kaori and Suzuno widened their eyes in surprise, and Acies stopped short of blowing a whistle.

“It happened when we went to Nerima.”

“I, I see.”

“Then? What was his answer!?”

“Yeah. Maou-san did answer me, he said that he would tell me after he sorts out his feelings.”

“Huh?”

Kaori hung her head, depressed.

“It’s the same as delaying the answer for later. Why is this dragging on so much?”

“Uh, that’s right.”

Chiho showed a bitter smile.

“But it felt as if the deadline was renewed, so...” Chiho said, feeling a little perplexed, “If I give him chocolate which is made too

exquisitely, not only will it make him nervous, it will just cause him to feel more pressure.”

Of course, Suzuno could understand the true intentions behind Chiho’s words.

Because of that, just this time, she was unable to say that nothing like that will happen.

Maou did put things aside even after knowing Chiho’s feelings, so Suzuno also felt that this was a responsibility he should bear as a man.

However, on the other hand, considering the scale of the problem Maou was facing, if he was forced to answer Chiho at this time, it would only negatively affect future events.

“Perhaps... that’s how it is.”

“Haah, but if what Acies said is true, I’ll be the one feeling the pressure.”

“I’m definitely not lying. Kusuda is seducing Maou!”

“Acies! You clearly didn’t phrase it that way just now!”

“Oh... Kusuda-san huh... hm.”

Chiho’s face was instantly devoid of emotion, but immediately after that, her shoulders slumped in exhaustion.

“I did not plan to skip Valentine’s Day in the first place, but considering Maou-san’s current situation, regardless of what I do now, it will look as if I am forcing Maou-san to accept my feelings, or give the impression that I am unable to observe the situation. But if I do nothing, I will be unable to accept it. I was thinking what I should do, and in the end, without any clue on what to do, I waited until now... but it would have been acceptable if it was Yusa-san, Suzuno-san, Amane-san or the apartment’s landlady, I never expected that Maou-san would receive chocolates from someone I don’t know at all.”

“Ah... yeah, erm... that’s right, yeah.”

Acies had said that Maou had “received chocolates which looked very expensive,” and it felt that if it was Maou at an earlier point of time, he would naturally look for Chiho to discuss about the possible situations when receiving chocolate and how to deal with such situations.

At almost the same time, Emi and Akiko were at the MgRonaldds in front of Hatagaya station, imagining similar things.

“If Alsiel was around, things would not have turned out like this.”

Considering how Maou had started to become negligent, display weakness, and be tired ever since Ashiya left Room 201, even if Emi had changed from how she was in the past, she would still scathingly comment on how the Demon King Army was unable to properly function simply because there was no Ashiya.

“By the way, Kisaki-san is MgRonaldds’ shop manager, right? If Sasachi feels that being the only one to give chocolate is too heavy of an action, can’t you give chocolate together with the other employees at work?”

Kaori leaned forward as if she had received a flash of inspiration, but Chiho shook her head with a miserable expression on her face.

“We’re forbidden from giving Valentine’s Day chocolate in the store.”

“Eh? Why?”

“Earlier, Kisaki-san said that employees are forbidden from giving each other chocolate within the store. If we want to give chocolate, we have to do it in private. The reasoning was because it might cause conflicts.”

“Oh~ I see. If there are many employees, it will turn out like that. Yeah, but what can be done. Do you have no choice but to give up?”

“Honestly, I’m thinking if that would be the best course of action.”

“Hm... but... Valentine’s Day is a rare occasion... ah.”

Suzuno looked at Chiho who was troubled, feeling worried, and Kaori, who understood Chiho’s intentions but was unable to wholly accept it, suddenly thought of something after she saw Suzuno.

“Suzuno-san, you have a good relationship with Maou-san, right?”

“Eh? A-About that. Uh, w-we are... good neighbors.”

Feeling surprised, Suzuno answered Kaori’s question.

Recently, Suzuno would only bring up the animosity between humans and demons when she wanted to hoodwink Maou, but if she was asked by a human who did not know anything “whether she was close to Maou,” she would still feel perplexed and be unable to give an immediate answer.

If Suzuno wanted to explain her relationship with Maou to Kaori, who did not know anything, she could only choose “friend” or “neighbor,” but Suzuno could not say the two of them were “friends,” so she could only give a vague answer.

“If you can’t give them to him in the store, can’t you give them together with a group of close friends?”

“W-Wait, Kaori-dono. W-What does that mean? D-Does that mean I have to give Maou chocolate too?”

“It feels like there is no other way. Can I ask you to help Sasachi with this?”

“W-Wait a moment, Kao! What are you saying to Suzuno-san!? Suzuno-san doesn’t have to give anything! This is my personal issue, how can I burden Suzuno-san because of this!?”

After Chiho got a fright from Kaori’s loss of control which fit her status as a high school student, she apologized to Suzuno.

“G-Giving, the Demon King chocolate? W-What?”

In a strange manner, Suzuno blushed furiously and stared at Kaori.

“...Suzuno-san?”

“W-What kind of expression and excuse should I use when I give it to him? Should I give him matcha? Or Wasanbon sugar? Or Kuromitsu? |2|

Then Suzuno began to frantically mumble to herself.

“T-That’s not good right? B-But if it’s obligatory chocolate, based on our current relationship, it won’t be that unnatural should I give him chocolate... it, it shouldn’t be strange, right? Yeah, but I gave him udon at the beginning... n-no, this situation is different from that time.”

“Suzuno? Why are you feeling serious trouble over this?”

“Ah!”

Acies’ indifferent voice caused Suzuno to come back to her senses.

After noticing the three gazes staring at her, Suzuno looked down, blushing once again.

“S-Sorry. A-Actually, I don’t have any experience with Valentine’s Day or similar matters... So, I have never given dessert to any men before.”

““Eh?”” Chiho and Kaori shouted in surprise.

From Kaori’s point of view, Suzuno may have looked young, but she gave off a very mature aura, so she did not expect that Suzuno had never taken part in activities related to Valentine’s Day. As for Chiho, she had never thought about it before, but considering the life Suzuno had spent in Ente Isla, it did not cross Chiho’s mind that Suzuno had never given gifts to someone of the opposite gender.

Chiho and Kaori did not have so much experience that they could look down on Suzuno, but normal people would have experienced Valentine’s Day in kindergarten, day care, or their own home.

“A-Anyway, even if you give chocolate together with me, it will still come across as unnatural. Because to Maou, I am not the type of

person to do such a thing, this kind of scheme would be too obvious...”

With her voice as small as the buzz of a mosquito, Suzuno gave her excuses to the two high school girls, using her hand which was not supporting Alas=Ramus to cover the area around her eyes which had turned red.

“Then how about I join in too!”

It was not clear if Acies could read Suzuno’s thoughts, but she chimed in and said this.

For Acies' situation, it was clear that she was looking forward to the return gift for White Day, so if she gave chocolate by herself, it would be a lot more natural than Suzuno doing so.

“Hm... I’m sorry, Acies, but it’s still rather difficult.”

Even if this was done, if they wanted to reduce the impact of Chiho’s chocolate on Maou, this was really too weak.

And if they wanted to cover it up, Chiho and Acies would need to give chocolate to Maou at the same time.

However, in recent times, Maou would only be in Sasazuka late at night, when he returned home, or in the morning, before he went to work.

As a high school student, these were not timings where Chiho could visit Room 201, and the occasion where the two of them could meet a few times, was in MgRonalds where giving chocolate was forbidden.

In this situation, Chiho did not think that she would be able to give Maou chocolate together with Acies.

“Then there are no other options! What can we do!?”

“Hm~ If I can give the chocolate together with someone else, then I would be able to work hard, but the current situation isn’t that appropriate, and there’s no reason to ask someone to do this with

me, it looks like nothing can be done.”

No matter what they did, if Chiho lacked the motivation to break out of this predicament, it was impossible to find an answer.

Just as the group did not know what to say—

“Fu... ahhhhh...”

—Alas=Ramus, who was taking an afternoon nap on Suzuno’s lap, woke up and rubbed her eyes in a drowsy manner.

“Ah, how cute.”

Kaori, who was seeing Alas=Ramus for the first time, watched the unique actions of a child in an excited manner.

“Alas=Ramus, you’re awake.”

“Fuah... Suzu nee-chan... ’orning... eh?”

After Alas=Ramus woke up, she greeted Suzuno with inaccurate pronunciation, then noticed that the environment around her was different from before she went to sleep.

“Not MgRonRon... where is this?”

“Good morning, Alas=Ramus-chan. This isn’t MgRonalds. This is Sentucky.”

“Entucky?”

“That’s right, Nee-sama! It’s the place where that damned angel is the shop manager!”

““Ah, hey!””

Even if Kaori was present, Acies still spoke to Alas=Ramus in her usual manner, causing Chiho and Suzuno to panic.

“How cute! Wow~ she looks so young, but she can speak so well!”

Luckily, Kaori’s focus was on the actions of the young child, an age group she had very little interaction with, so she did not hear Acies’ careless choice of words.

“Acies and Alas=Ramus are sisters, but their age gap is rather big huh?”

“Despite our appearances, our age gap isn’t that big.”

“...Who?”

Alas=Ramus finally noticed someone she did not know was present and asked this warily.

“Oh, ah, uh, erm, I, my name is Shouji Kaori...”

Because Alas=Ramus spoke to her suddenly and Kaori was not used to dealing with children, she replied in a rather flustered manner, and Chiho intervened in a timely manner,

“Alas=Ramus-chan. This older sister is my friend, Kaori nee-san.”

“...Kao nee-chan?”

“Oh dear, this is super cute, I’m going to get a nose bleed. Ah, of course I want to take care of her like this. If I can foster better relations with her, I’ll definitely want to take care of her. If I am addressed like this by this angelic child, I will take care of her without question.”

“Kaori, nee-sama isn’t an angel!”

Chiho and Suzuno were unable to stop Acies, who hated the term “angel,” and the latter spoke, with her words containing the meaning “Alas=Ramus is the older sister, I’m the younger sister,” but Kaori did not notice at all.

“Oh my, I’ve only met Maou-san a few times, so I don’t really remember his appearance, but I do remember that his hair was black. His relatives should be his distant relatives, right?”

“T-That’s right...ahaha.”

“Rather than relatives, they’re more like parent and child.”

“Y-Yes! Their relationship is so good that people think that they are parent and child!”

Chiho and Suzuno barely managed to follow up after Acies' major slip up.

“Parent and child... parent and child huh.”

However, from this unnatural conversation, Kaori discovered a ray of hope.

“K-Kao?”

“Sasachi. I’ve helped you to think of a really perfect and reasonable cover story, hohoho.”

“Kaori?”

“K-Kaori-dono... what are you saying?”

“Listen well, okay? Alas=Ramus is Maou-san’s relative, but Yusa-san does help to take care of her. Then Alas=Ramus and Acies are sisters, and their relationship with Sasachi and Suzuno-san is very good. Am I right?”

“Y-Yeah...”

“T-That is correct...”

Feeling nervous, Chiho and Suzuno waited for Kaori to continue, the latter showed a very confident smile and said, “If you want to give chocolate to Maou-san, only this way is left!”

Kaori started to outline her plan, which was so ingenious that the others began to wonder why Chiho had not thought of such a thing.

※

“Chocolate made by Alas=Ramus?”

“Shh! E-Emilia, you are too loud!”

Emi, who had returned to Room 202 to fetch Alas=Ramus after ending her shift which began in the morning, felt a huge headache after hearing from the strangely fatigued Suzuno about the Sasahata High School incident which was caused by Acies.

In the end, not only did Acies make contact with Chiho’s classmate

Shouji Kaori, after hearing Kaori's suggestion to make use of Alas=Ramus so Chiho could give Maou chocolate without inflicting further pressure on him, Emi felt like fainting on the spot.

According to Kaori, "if it was chocolate made together with Alas=Ramus, who played the role of the daughter," Maou would not feel that much pressure if this chocolate was given to him.

"Hey, Bell."

"W-What is it?"

"I only thought of this now."

"Y-Yeah..."

Emi's low voice sounded as if it came from a demon's mouth.

"But if I defeated Alsiel, the Demon King Army would have naturally fallen apart, right?"

"...It is possible."

"Seriously, what is this!? Why is that guy so useless just because Alsiel is not around!?"

"This is probably what is known as an outstanding minister in the background."

"Knock it off! Only a few hours have passed, alright? About Maou receiving obligatory chocolate at his training, I just discussed with Akiko-san at the store, 'hoping that he won't look for Chiho-chan and discuss strange things,' you know?"

"W-With regards to that, I am also partly responsible."

"In fact, it's the Demon King's fault for accepting obligatory chocolate in a place where Acies could see!"

"He, he shouldn't be feeling shaken. Acies said that he thought about obligatory chocolate immediately..."

"Then he shouldn't discuss it with other people with such a stern expression and handle it quietly on his own!"

“T-That makes sense...”

Suzuno thought what Emi said was reasonable, but just as she wondered why Emi was so strangely worked up today.

“Suzu nee-chan, Suzu nee-chan.”

Alas=Ramus, who had been flipping through Suzuno’s books and magazines in the corner of the room, glanced sideways at her Mama who was grabbing her head and squatting down, and at the same time, grabbed the edge of Suzuno’s kimono to show her one of the pages in a magazine.

“This, this is good.”

Alas=Ramus did not know what Suzuno and Emi were talking about, but she still understood a little. However, she just had to flip to the page with the special feature on Valentine’s Day, showing the products of a speciality chocolate shop opened at Harajuku Omotesandō, with their product “Ai no Ki” being covered in colorful “heart shaped fruits.”

“Uh!”

Suzuno’s expression became stiff, and quickly covered the magazine before Emi could look up.

“A-Alas=Ramus, you can only buy this when you’re older. Uh, because it’s expensive.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes, it is. Okay? You’re a good girl, so you can’t show this to Papa and Mama. Alright?”

“...Okay.”

Alas=Ramus looked like she could not accept it, but she still complied obediently.

Suzuno broke out into cold sweat.

A tree shaped chocolate bearing bright colored fruits would make

anyone think of the Tree of Life, this might inflict a totally different kind of pressure on Maou and Emi.

“Then what? Putting aside whatever stress he’s feeling, it’s not as if I do not understand the proposal to make chocolate together with Alas=Ramus. But if this is really going to be done...”

Emi clenched her fists so tightly that it felt as if her hand was going to bleed.

“Then I will have to make chocolate too?”

“Haah, it would probably turn out like that.”

Suzuno shifted her gaze away from Emi but did not disagree.

Ignoring Chiho’s situation, if Alas=Ramus was to give “Papa” a handmade present, she would definitely want to make it together with “Mama.”

The relationship between the two of them may have improved, the basis of the activity was for the girl to give the guy a present which contained her feelings, and Suzuno did not think that Emi would actively participate in it.

“...If it’s just obligatory chocolate, then I can only see it as having no other choice.”

“Hm?”

“Because I returned to Ente Isla before, whether it was Christmas or New Year, I was unable to have Alas=Ramus experience these festivals, right? On this topic alone, Ente Isla has a custom which is similar to Valentine’s Day, and the most important thing is that Alas=Ramus said that she wants to give 『Papa』 chocolate.”

“Is that so?”

“I briefly taught her about it.”

“Really?”

In a different sense, this shocked Suzuno.

Considering the nature of Valentine's Day, once Alas=Ramus knew about this day, Emi would have no choice but to participate in this activity.

However, if Emi and Alas=Ramus wanted to give chocolate together, the people they could give to were only Nord, Maou, Ashiya, and Urushihara.

Suzuno widened her eyes in surprise, and after discovering that Alas=Ramus was looking at the contents page for a different Valentine's Day chocolate special feature, she shifted her gaze back to Emi.

“You planned to give chocolate to the Demon King?”

“Rather than the Demon King, it was the employees at the store in front of Hatagaya station, including 『Maou-san』.”

Emi explained that there was a practice of giving obligatory chocolate when she was working at Docodemo, and the fact that Kisaki banned such a practice at McGonalds.

“I feel that it's a little rude to Chiho-chan to be saying this, but as long as everyone follows the trend of giving obligatory chocolate, people will not think too much about it. Therefore, I feel that it's not a big issue at all.”

“Because you have already taught Alas=Ramus the concept of Valentine's Day, you cannot use the workplace as a cover and give them to him on personal grounds.”

“Haah, that's right. Erm...”

Emi suddenly started speaking vaguely.

“...It sounds like I'm being stubborn, but I'm the same too. It'd be troublesome if the Demon King thought too much about it, so I planned to find a cover up too. And whatever happened today made me confirm that I wasn't overthinking this.”

“Whatever happened today, refers to the trainee Kusuda-san

giving him chocolate?”

“Oh, she’s called Kusuda-san huh.”

Emi repeated that name in a rather cold tone.

“The Demon King has a serious personality, right?”

“Y-Yes, that’s right.”

“So, erm, we are not aiming to kill each other now, but if I suddenly give him chocolate, he might have strange thoughts again.”

“What kind of strange thoughts?”

“How should I put it, I feel that the relationship between the Demon King and I was mainly built on debts of gratitude and a cost-benefit basis. For example, during the incident at the underground metro, I was forced to get help from the Demon King, so if it was meant to be a payback for that time, I could still accept it. However...”

Emi arranged her inner thoughts while speaking at a rather fast pace, and Suzuno listened quietly.

“However, giving obligatory chocolate on a personal basis isn’t like that right? Even if it’s obligatory chocolate, it still carries the implication of liking the other party. I am still not confident that I can harbor positive feelings towards the Demon King. He should be the same as well. I can no longer kill the Demon King, and the Demon King knows this. Even so...”

“Uu?”

Pulling Alas=Ramus over together with the magazine, Emi put Alas=Ramus on her lap.

“If I give him something this good, the relationship between us is likely to change.”

What Alas=Ramus flipped open was a Valentine’s Day special guide for a shopping mall, various product information was

published in it, ranging from well-known premium chocolates to economically priced ones.

“...Is that so?”

“Probably.”

Emi nodded unsurely in response to Suzuno’s question.

“I don’t hate the Demon King anymore, but that doesn’t mean that I have already forgiven him. The Demon King definitely understands this. So...”

Emi flipped through the magazine, and finally stopped at the page featuring handmade chocolate.

“I feel that it would be better if I did not prepare obligatory chocolate. Of course, Alas=Ramus would want to give the Demon King chocolate, so if she wants to make it, then I will help. I feel bad for Chiho-chan, but I want Alas=Ramus to personally give her 『Papa』 chocolate, so I hope Chiho-chan can find someone else to be her shield.”

“Emilia...”

“And although Chiho-chan did say that she did not want to inflict stress on the Demon King, if she does not pressure him little by little, the Demon King will definitely think that Chiho-chan is willing to wait until the battle is over and would not think about it at all. If so, he would surely start troubling over it again.”

This was very likely to happen.

“So if Chiho-chan wants to give the Demon King chocolate, I feel that she can just act the same as in the past and express her own feelings directly and honestly. Ah, but...”

Emi suddenly looked up and smiled in a troubled manner.

“What does the most important person, Chiho-chan, think? Did she approve of Kaori’s proposal?”

“Honestly, it was a little vague.”

At that moment, Chiho did turn to Kaori—

『That's it! So there's still this method!』

—and replied this way.

“Has she mentioned anything about this to you, Emilia...?”

“No.”

Emi picked up her mobile phone to confirm whether there were any new messages, but Chiho did not contact her at all.

“Was she just trying to carry on the conversation in front of her friend who does not know anything about Ente Isla?”

If Chiho wanted Alas=Ramus to help, she would have gotten Emi involved.

However, considering Chiho's current position, she probably did not dare to tell Emi that she wanted to give Maou Valentine's Day chocolate.

The reason was that Chiho herself knew that clarifying her relationship with Maou was not as important as the Battle to Defeat God.

“Letting that girl get together with the Demon King is such a waste.”

“That's right, I agree with this.”

“However, there's no reasoning behind such a thing in the first place.”

Love was just that sort of thing.

“...Hey, Bell.”

“Hm?”

“Have you ever been in love?”

“Never.”

Suzuno's reply was so unnaturally fast, causing Emi, the one who

asked the question, to get a huge shock.

“Really?”

“Haah... it feels a little lonely to say this, but my family background left me with no hopes of loving freely, my work environment made it unsuitable to carry out that kind of thing, and most importantly... there was no man who could make me want to eliminate these obstacles.”

So that was how it was, Suzuno had also led a hard life which was completely different from Emi’s experiences.

Amongst that, she probably did not have any time to develop feelings of fondness or fall in love with someone.

“How about Emilia?”

“Hm... I’ve probably... felt that way before.”

“Probably?”

“Normally, it probably could not be considered as love. Because the person I like is my father.”

“Hm.”

Suzuno smiled in a troubled manner.

“It’s very different.”

It was just like a young daughter saying that she would marry her father.

“I never had a 『Mother』, and no matter what I did, I could only follow behind my Father... he was strong and dependable, and although he can be an airhead in some areas, he would always protect me.”

“...Emilia, wait a moment, you...”

“No, it’s not what you’re thinking.”

“Mama?”

Emi rested her face against the back of Alas=Ramus' head, showing a smile no one could see.

“If I forgive him from the bottom of my heart, perhaps the results will be different.”

These were Emi's heartfelt words.

“It's useless to think about this now. If Chiho-chan says that she wants to do this, I'll think about it then. I arranged to meet up with Em and Alber over there (Ente Isla) today, and if nothing goes wrong, the earliest I can see Chiho-chan would be on Valentine's Day.”

“O-Oh.”

Suzuno was stunned for a moment, Alas=Ramus jumped down from Emi's legs and looked up at her.

“By the way, will you continue your stay at Sasazuka today?”

“Yes. Because I was disrupted by Acies halfway through my task, I wish to neaten up the vegetable garden in the backyard a little more.”

“I understand. I'll return to Eifuku for a bit and go over after changing and cleaning up a little, anyway, that's the work I'll be doing for today. Alas=Ramus, we're going home. Put the books away.”

“Yeah!”

Following Emi's instructions, Alas=Ramus closed all the half-read books, and with her own way of cleaning, stacked all of them in the corner of the room.

Emi put on her coat, and as she was helping Alas=Ramus put on her woollen hat, she suddenly turned to Suzuno and asked, “Hey, Bell.”

“Hm?”

“You frequently make dinner for the Demon King and the others

together with Chiho-chan and Alsiel, right?”

“That’s right.”

“Is the Demon King picky with his food?”

“About that, I discussed this with Chiho-dono before. The Demon King would frequently lecture Lucifer, but his food preferences are basically very similar to Lucifer. Simply put, he likes strongly flavored food, meat, and carbohydrates. Phrasing it in a bad way, he has child-like tastes. Even so, it’s not like he does not eat vegetables and fish. So he is probably not picky with his food, I guess?”

“I see, then how about sweets?”

“I rarely see him eat sweets, but when I first came to Japan, Alsiel said that he was going to make cake using the rice cooker, and Chiho-dono brought ice cream for them to eat, so it’s not like he does not eat any at all.”

“I get it, thanks. Then I’m leaving first.”

“Suzu nee-chan! Bye bye!”

“Yeah, be careful on the way back. Alas=Ramus too.”

Emi did not look back, and only Alas=Ramus turned back and waved to Suzuno as she confirmed the feeling of the shoes on her feet after she spent some effort to put them on.

Listening to the fading sounds of the two of them walking on the common staircase, Suzuno prepared to lock the door—

“Hm?”

—but because Suzuno suddenly felt that something was strange, she subconsciously stopped what she was doing.

“Hmmm?”

Before Emi went back, she seemed to have said something strange.

It felt as if she had answered something she normally would not have mentioned.

Without moving from where she stood, Suzuno thought about it for a while, but unable to pinpoint what was strange, she locked the door.

After that, she looked at the clock, and as she thought, *It's a little early, but should I prepare to go to the baths—*

“Ah.”

—she finally understood what was strange about Emi's behavior from earlier and showed a bright expression.

That's right, under normal circumstances, only Chiho would be concerned about what the inhabitants of the Demon Fortress liked to eat; this was the first time she had talked about this with Emi, which was why she was bothered by it.

“So that's what it was...”

From a clear cloudless sky for as far as the eye can see, Suzuno's thoughts plunged to a place filled with rain heavy clouds which could turn into a storm anytime.

“Eh?”

Emi wanted to know what Maou liked to eat.

Why was that so?

“Emilia?”

Feeling stunned and unable to form a question, Suzuno called out for Emilia who was no longer around.

“Mama, wait, walking too fast.”

Alas=Ramus moved her small limbs with all her might, chasing after Emi who was walking at an unnaturally fast pace on the streets of Sasazuka at night.

“Ah, s-sorry.”

Emi only found out that she was walking too quickly after

Alas=Ramus pointed it out to her; she quickly stopped and turned around, and Alas=Ramus continued her momentum to hug Emi's leg.

“Take that, Mama.”

“Kya! H-Hey, Alas=Ramus, that's dangerous.”

Emi showed a troubled smile towards Alas=Ramus who was playing around, but her “daughter,” who looked up at her while standing under the streetlights, asked her a question which left her speechless.

“Mama, are you okay? Your face is very red.”

“...Ugh.”

Emi could not help but touch her own face.

Even if she did this, it was a winter night after all.

As long as she used her hand to touch her face, she would notice that her body temperature was higher, but could not confirm whether her face had really “turned red.”

In addition, the two of them were standing under the streetlight. From where Alas=Ramus was standing, the light source would be located behind her, so she might have been mistaken.

“...Hey, Alas=Ramus.”

“Yes!”

Emi first thought of an excuse, and finally spoke,

“Does Alas=Ramus like Papa?”

“Ehehehe~ I like him.”

Alas=Ramus acted shyly, but she still said that with a smile.

“...I see.”

Emi nodded, fell silent for a short while—

“Wah? Mama?”

—and pulled down Alas=Ramus' hat.

Then Emi squatted down and hugged Alas=Ramus.

“...Hey, Alas=Ramus.”

“Wapuh.”

Alas=Ramus could not see in front of her, but she still hugged Emi's neck with a grin, on the other hand, the light from the streetlight was behind Emi's face, causing her expression to be covered in shadows.

“I wonder...”

Therefore, no one could see the expression on her face.

“What kind of chocolate would make Papa happy when he receives it...”

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Ten thirty in the evening.

Maou, who left work slightly earlier than closing time, raised an eyebrow on reflex when he saw that the light in Room 202 was turned on.

“Suzuno is still staying here today, huh.”

Suzuno would not go out of her way to take care of Maou, but just knowing that he was not the only person in this huge apartment complex was enough to warm his feelings.

Maou walked up the stairs, thinking about what he needed to do before he went to sleep.

“You're back.”

“Woah?”

Suzuno opened the door facing the public corridor and looked out from Room 202, giving Maou a shock.

“W-What is it?”

“...”

Suzuno looked like she had been waiting for Maou, but she only silently stared at him.

“Suzuno?”

“I have a lot of things to say.”

“Huh?”

“But you should have a more determined attitude and act more like a Demon King.”

“Why are you saying this so suddenly!”

The first thing the neighbor said to Maou when he just reached home were words that conveyed a strong feeling of pity.

“Noisy. You became so shaken just from receiving obligatory chocolate; because you always act this way, you end up causing the people around you to worry excessively.”

“Wait a moment! Why do you know about this... did Emi mention this? Or was it Acies?”

Suzuno, who had been in Ente Isla until yesterday, already knew about this today, this meant that the person who had leaked the news was either Emi, who Maou had discussed this with, or Acies, who had been present when it happened.

“Both of them mentioned it. Especially Acies, she really ran me ragged today.”

This sentence gave Maou a double blow.

“B-Both of them? Ran you ragged, hey, what did Acies do today...”

“I do not wish to speak about it anymore. If you insist on knowing, ask Acies or Chiho-dono.”

“Gyah!”

Rather than a response, this was a sound Maou produced on reflex.

Why was Chiho's name mentioned at this time?

Suzuno ignored Maou's confusion and continued to speak as if she was ranting,

"You... what are your plans? Recently, I am starting to become confused on what is your purpose for living. What is going through your head?"

"What's going through my head, why are you making me sound like Urushihara..."

"I do not care if you plan to conquer the world as Demon King, or become a full-time employee as a human, but is your name 『Demon King』? Or 『full-time employee』? The demon named Satan or the human named Maou Sadao, when you are not a Demon King or full-time employee, what is your reason for living?"

"...What happened?"

Suzuno, who adopted a rare stern tone, looked like she was going to cry at any moment.

"Nothing happened!"

It did not look like nothing happened, but Maou could not continue asking about it.

The humming from the fluorescent lamp which was close to breaking sounded strangely ear piercing.

"Hey, Demon King."

"...Yeah."

"I do not know what kind of place the Demon World is nor how you became Demon King. However, you subordinated Alsiel, Lucifer, Camio, the Malebranches, and many other demons and unified the Demon World."

"Uh... yeah."

"It was because at that time, you were a man who was stronger,

more charismatic, and more magnanimous than any other demon in the Demon World, that is why you became 『King』, correct? Can you show us your magnanimous spirit? If this goes on, as one of the Demon Generals, I will find myself unable to respect my own superior.”

“...You really use that status only when it’s advantageous to you.”

“You might think that way, but I only use it when it should be used.”

Suzuno frowned in regret, and lightly gripped the hem of her kimono with her hands which were shivering from the cold.

“Even if I wish to provide assistance when my superior, the Demon King, is feeling lost and confused, will you listen to what a mere human... listen to the words of an enemy, an Inquisitor from the Theocracy? You probably will not listen, right?”

“About that, yeah, I won’t.”

“Then I can only use my status as a Demon General, correct? Otherwise I cannot be of any help to you.”

“Suzuno?”

Because it felt as if he had heard some strange words, Maou showed a shocked expression. As for Suzuno, she returned to her senses and on reflex, used her hands which had been gripping her kimono to cover her own mouth.

“A-Anyway.”

“Y-Yeah.”

“I am just asking you to buck up.”

“I understand. Erhm, sorry. I’ll keep that in mind.”

“...Then that is all.”

Suzuno created a breeze in the dry corridor with her movements as she prepared to return to her room.

“Hey, Suzuno.”

“What is it?”

Suzuno did not look back and only stopped walking.

“Can I shamelessly ask one question? Chi-chan...”

“No.”

“.....Eh?”

“I do not wish to listen, and do not wish to say irresponsible things, so even if I listen, I have nothing to say. Because I do not have any... I do not wish to speak carelessly.”

“W-What? Do not have any what?”

“If Chiho-dono is an important person to you, then find the answer yourself. Goodbye.”

After saying this, Suzuno returned to Room 202 without waiting for Maou to reply.

Other than the sound of the door being locked, Maou no longer sensed any activity or noise, but he still continued to stay where he was, feeling stunned.

Suzuno looked like she was just rattling off on her own, but during the day time, Suzuno must have experienced something to make her feel like she had to wait for Maou to return and say these things.

“...Ah.”

Maou scratched his head with some force, and as if to suppress the commotion within his heart, he roughly closed the door to Room 201.

He knew that changes had occurred in his surroundings, and though he had done this, things would not return to the ambiguous state it was before.

“.....Haah.”

Suzuno was unable to walk through the space which made up the porch and squatted where she stood.

She covered her face and the breath she exhaled turned white within the room where the temperature had dropped somewhen before.

“That huge liar.”

She moved her hands away from her face and stared at her palms.

Her palms, which had been stained by blood from “holy tasks” were now clean palms that only smelled of the peach fragrance from hand soap.

Whether it was Japan, Earth, or Ente Isla, these palms looked like the palms belonging to a normal woman.

“Liar.”

Suzuno mumbled once again.

“There needs to be a reason for taking the longer path too?”

No matter how thin or cheap the walls of Villa Rosa Sasazuka were, she could not allow this to be heard.

Then as if to dispel the depressing words from within her, Suzuno stood up suddenly.

“...What is the difference.”

After carelessly taking off her straw sandals and walking on the tatami, Suzuno looked at the pot placed on the stove.

Stewed meat and potatoes in a quantity which far exceeded the portion need by Suzuno, a single person, were immersed in its broth.

“What belief, this is all bullshit.”

Suzuno planned to turn off the flame on the stove but gave up immediately.

“Loves to tell lies and is not straightforward, but is not so strong

headed as to want to snatch away the desires of others.”

Suzuno put the lid on the pot, and after spreading out the futon, she efficiently untied her obi, changed into sleepwear, and laid on the floor.

“In the end, I have no right to lecture others. What kind of inquisitor am I?”

After mumbling these bitter words, Suzuno closed her eyes.

At this moment.

“Hm?”

Her mobile phone which was placed next to her pillow beeped, indicating that a message had been received.

After picking it up and opening it, the name shown on the screen was Ashiya Shiro.

“Alsiel?”

Ashiya should have currently be at the Demon Fortress in Ente Isla, so the message he sent was actually via the long-distance communication method, Idea Link.

Suzuno, who thought it was an emergency, opened the message and realised that it contained something unexpected instead.

『We have already found the Nothung and Ginkan no Mado. I wish to discuss with you about the methods to search for the remaining Astral Gem and Adramelechinus’ Demonic Spear. Please contact me.』

To repair the Ente Isla Demon Fortress which would also be used in the battle against God, four parts were needed, and two of them were quickly found.

Since two out of the three parts predicted to in the Demon World were already found, then it would only be a matter of time before they found the remaining one.

With that, the biggest issue was how to peacefully recover the last part which was in human possession — Adramelechinus' Demonic Spear.

“I'm not sure if this is considered good timing or not.”

Suzuno smiled bitterly.

“But with this, both me and all the others will be slightly more focused.”

After Suzuno sent a short message to acknowledge it, she switched her phone to silent mode and quietly closed her eyes.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEMON KING AND HERO, HAVING NO OPPORTUNITY TO ACT

**THE
DEMON KING
AND HERO,
HAVING
NO
OPPORTUNITY
TO ACT**



“According to what is known in the Demon World, Adramelechinus’ Demonic Spear is a weapon passed down through generations of the noble Ashen Horn clan along with that name. Those humans who know Adramelech or those who fought with him should all know this, that even in the eyes of the demons of the Demon World, that spear still looks long and large.”

“That’s right, the diameter of the handle of the spear was around the size of the pillars of this fortress.”

To the people who would usually come and go from Room 201 of Villa Rosa Sasazuka, this was a very strange scene to imagine.

“The Ashen Horns were skilled in spells related to water and ice, and it was said that this was due to the power of the demonic spear. The reason for appointing Adramelech as the commander in charge of suppressing the Northern Continent was because of its plentiful water resources and proximity to the Arctic Circle.”

“Then I understand now. When the Northern Continent was being controlled by Adramelech, trees created from ice were found all over the continent. We were used to calling them 『Ice Tree Towers』, but when we learned that these were magical objects created by Adramelech himself by injecting demonic magic into the underground to observe the whole of the Northern Continent, I really got a huge shock.”

This place was one of the facilities within the base headquarters set up by an organization temporarily known as the Allied East and West Continent Deicide Brigade, located in the ruins of Isla Kentorum.

Suzuno rushed over immediately after receiving a notification from Ashiya about finding two important items and discovered that the ones chairing the meeting were actually Urushihara and Alberto, the two people who could only be described as extremely strange.

To begin with, just the sight of Urushihara, who was the epitome

of an unmotivated recluse, taking command of the situation was a sight just as unimaginable as adding a second layer of secret sauce to this carefully prepared strange and unique state of affairs.

Maou, Emi, and Chiho did not attend this meeting -- Ashiya was working at the Eastern Continent, and Emerada had returned to Saint Aire for the time being to avoid arousing suspicion, so Suzuno, the only person to think that this was strange, regretfully could not find anyone else to share this feeling with.

“This was the only part where we knew its location from the start, but because of a certain reason, we do not yet have any plans to retrieve it, even now when Nothung and Ginkan no Mado have been found.”

“Haah, because after the Hero and the others (we) defeated Adramelech, we gifted the spear to the people of the Northern Continent to be used as a memorial.”

“It’s best to avoid having anyone else outside of the current members know about the plan to invade Heaven. Heather Lumark may be involved in this, but in Saint Aire, even the Emperor and the Administration do not know about this. If the people of the Northern Continent were to interfere at that point, the situation would become so troublesome that I would just want to wash my hands of it.”

“Simply put, through this meeting, we would like to gather everyone’s opinions and figure out how to safely snatch Adramelech’s inheritance from the Northern Continent with our limited manpower.”

Other than Urushihara and Alberto who were chairing the meeting, Suzuno, Lumark, Farfarello, Lailah, and Nord were there.

“It may be a 『memorial gifted to the Northern Continent』, but what is the spear’s current condition?” Nord, the only normal human in the group, asked rather timidly.

“About this question, it’d be faster to look at it directly.”

Then, Urushihara took out his frequently used laptop.

A photo was shown on the screen, and the contents was a city built on a mountain.

“By the way, to get this image, I asked the Malebranche Chieftain Ciriatto to take photos with Maou’s digital camera. The city in this photo is Fiensi, the federal capital of the Northern Continent, commonly known as the 『Goat’s Enclosure』.”

The city, made up of short, brick buildings, each unique in appearance, extended all the way to the plains, but within the city, there was an open space which took up one-fifth of the city’s area.

It appeared to be an overly spacious sports ground, but an item which looked like a memorial plaque was erected in the centre.

After Urushihara used the keyboard to zoom in onto the memorial plaque, everyone could see that it was an object which looked like a large pillar made from metal.

“Amazing. This drawing is so detailed... I really want that.”

No one knew what she was specifically commenting on, but Lumark sucked in a breath after she saw the high-quality image on the computer.

“Don’t misuse it.”

After Alberto said this, Lumark came to her senses and leaned back into her seat.

“This is just a cheap old model, I can easily recommend a lot of better ones to you.”

As for Urushihara, he voiced his usual scathing remarks on Maou’s taste in electronics.

“Haah, but this photo did capture everything we needed to see. It’s obvious, right? Adramelechinus’ Demonic Spear has been treated as a commemoration of the defeat of the Northern General of the Demon King Army, erected in the centre of the Goat Enclosure.”

It was as if Adramelechinus' Demonic Spear was part of the "Goat's Enclosure" since the beginning, watching over the largest city in the Northern Continent in a grand and imposing manner.

The end of the spear was buried in the ground, and as reinforcement, the surroundings were covered in something akin to concrete so people could walk up and stand right next to it.

Looking like Adramelech's tombstone, many people gathered around the spear, peacefully enjoying their meals or treating that place as a meeting spot, as if it was a tourism attraction.

"With this, everyone should understand that regardless of whether it's taking the spear without permission or asking the other party to give it to us, neither method will be that easy."

What Urushihara said caused Suzuno, Lumark, and Nord, who had asked the question, to nod deeply.

It was a country with a harsh environment where many minority tribes and clans gathered, but it was still known as "the most peaceful continent amongst the five continents." This was because of Fiensi, also known as "Goat's Enclosure."

Every five years, the Northern Continent would hold a Jirga, a continent-wide joint conference amongst the representatives from the various clans.

During the Jirga, they will hold an election to decide the overall representative of the Northern Continent, the "Enclosure Chief."

The election spanned two weeks, and during this time, all the people, products, and cultures across the continent gathered at the Goat's Enclosure to hold a lively festival.

The "Gakusen Corps," made up of elite soldiers chosen from all the clans within the continent, would also be summoned. If there were serious conflicts between the clans that could not be settled via talks, the members of the Corps could compete against each other to settle the conflict.

Because of this, the bloody wars seen on other continents rarely happened in the Northern Continent's history. Clans did not invade each other's territories, and they showed an abnormal level of unity whenever a crisis would occur. However, under normal circumstances, they would employ a non-interference policy.

Therefore, the feelings and thoughts they had towards Adramelech was very different from how the other continents felt about the other Demon Generals.

"I've sort of mentioned it to Bell before, but it could have been possible for Adramelech to be accepted by the people of the Northern Continent."

"What is going on? Why did it turn out like that?" Lumark asked in surprise.

During the invasion of the Demon King Army, Lumark was the vice-captain of the Western Continent Guard Knights, and the one who trampled on her home country was Urushihara, who was standing in front of her today and chairing the meeting.

The one who conquered the Western Continent, Urushihara, also known as Lucifer's Army, did not make the situation as bad as the situation caused by Malacoda's Army in the Southern Continent, but it was not as organized as Alsiel's Army in the East, so it caused much sacrifice and chaos in the Western Continent. The continent was even used as an average standard to measure the damage caused by the Demon King Army.

Lumark could not imagine that there would be people amongst the humans who could accept a Demon General, the invaders.

"It was because Adramelech's personality was more compatible with the mental characteristics of the people the Northern Continent. Simply put, a mature person."

"Heh."

Suzuno, who had heard this explanation before, could not help

but smile at Alberto's roundabout description.

“After he stripped the Gakusen Corps of their equipment and banished them from the continent, he let the 『Enclosure Chief』 call for a Jirga. During the Jirga, he explained his strategy for conquering the continent, and allowed those unhappy clans to express their opinions. In reality, those who resisted were killed like blood sacrifices, but he accepted some of the opinions. How should I put it, to the people of the Northern Continent, it was enough that he was not a person who did not listen to reason.”

The people of the Northern Continent did not actively accept the invasion of the Demon King Army, but compared to the other continents, Adramelech was an opponent to whom they felt they could accept losing to.

“How should I say this? I thought Adramelech was someone whose brains were also made of muscle. Unexpectedly, he could also use these tactics to win over the hearts of humans.”

“Lucifer, Lumark's expression is very scary, so please shut up for a bit.”

“Ow!”

The large Alberto used his elbow to nudge Lucifer, who had been talking next to him.

Amongst those currently present, Lumark was the only human who had a confirmed hostile relation to Lucifer.

Alberto had only become Emi's comrade after Lucifer was defeated by Hero Emilia, so to him, the relationship between Urushihara, the aggressor, and Lumark, the victim, was a delicate issue.

“Anyway, the problem is that both the various clans in the Northern Continent and Fiensi have already accepted Adramelech's occupation plans as part of their history. In addition -- Emilia, the others, and I, someone from the Northern Continent, had defeated

him -- so in the eyes of the people of the Northern Continent, the spear he left behind is a symbol of loss and victory, an item which symbolizes the turning points in history.”

“The troublesome thing is the fact that we need that spear. It’s something which belongs to the Demon World in the first place.”

“Shut up.”

“Then? The actual question is, does Mr. Alberto think that it’s possible for them to give us the demonic spear?” Suzuno asked.

“We asked everyone to come here because it’s impossible for that to happen,” Alberto bluntly replied, “There will be conflicts no matter what we do. If we’re not careful, we might even aggravate the Southern Continent.”

“...I thought so,” Suzuno mumbled.

Maou and Emi acted for the sake of Alas=Ramus, but Lumark and the Hakin Knight Troops acted because they wanted to defeat Ignora and avoid the possible crisis of going extinct in Ente Isla’s distant future.

To avoid this situation, they needed to search for the Noah Gear and make the Demon Fortress fly, so the humans and demons had no choice but to work together.

However, in reality, if not for Lumark and Emerada from Holy Saint Aire Empire working together with Maou and Afsahan’s Unifying Azure Emperor Fu Junyan’s cooperation with Ashiya based on their personal ties with each other, they would not have accomplished such things. Most of the countries in the world still did not know about this operation, and even the news that the Hero Emilia and Demon King Satan were still alive had not been leaked.

Once this operation was made public knowledge, it was guaranteed that rather than the truth, the news of “Saint Aire’s Heather Lumark and the Unifying Azure Emperor are secretly working together with the demons” would be spread around

instead. If this happened, not just the Northern Continent and the Southern Continent, sparks of suspicion would be ignited amongst the various countries from all of the four continents.

Therefore, even if it was to save the humans, no one suggested that they ask the whole world for help.

Only those close to Maou and Emi could truly understand the truth about the Sephirah and the Tree of Life. For the areas where the teachings of the Theocracy were foreign, it would take decades for the locals to accept this concept.

As mentioned before, just the fact that they had to work with demons was a point of disagreement amongst the humans. In addition, they still had to defeat a “God” whom they did not even know existed or not. Therefore, it was impossible for any country to accept this kind of goal.

Unless a crisis as real and pressing as the Demon King Army invasion occurred, humans would definitely not work together. The political battles within the Five Continent Knight Alliance, formed to restore the Central Continent, was the best example of this.

After the Demon King Army retreated, this battle over power had permeated all the countries and political organizations in the world like the capillaries found in humans, continuously absorbing the nutrients known as greed.

That was why Lumark, Emerada, and the Unifying Azure Emperor wanted to solve this on their own.

This would allow everything to progress more smoothly; if they did not publicize the operation, they could restrict fighting for political power to the bare minimum.

The burden borne by Saint Aire and Afsahan was larger, but compared to the losses from challenging the Tree of Life and Heaven, the benefits of handling the problem the world had to face much earlier than anyone else outweighed the burden they had to bear.

Of course, Saint Aire and Afsahan had other motives, but if they wanted to initiate the Battle to Defeat God, the most effective way would be to use the existing structure.

The problem was the Adramelechinus' Demonic Spear was left in Fiensi, the federal capital of the Northern Continent.

To take away the demonic spear without any of the citizens of the Northern Continent knowing about it was physically, politically, and spiritually impossible.

“Even if we want to negotiate with them, even picking someone amongst us as a representative is a problem. Mr. Alberto has to be involved, but we can't leave it to him alone.”

“That's the problem. It's a bit strange to be saying this, but even if everyone admired and praised me as one of the Hero's comrades, I will still be treated like a brat when I return to my hometown, and my clout is not so big that I can arrange for everyone to meet with the clan leader. Since this is related to Adramelech's inheritance, we have to negotiate with the Enclosure Chief. If so, even Emerada won't be enough in terms of her position. For taking on the position of an ambassador and to negotiate on equal standing with the other party, only Lumark and Emilia would be eligible candidates amongst us.”

The Enclosure Chief did not have absolute authority an Emperor did to give orders to all the clans, but he still had a certain amount of influence.

Therefore, only a person who understood this power and would not abuse it would be nominated as the Enclosure Chief.

Ignoring the current internal situation of the Northern Continent for now, if an outsider wanted to see the Enclosure Chief, they would only stand a chance if they sent their highest-ranking envoy.

“If so, let's send Emilia. If we explain the situation to her properly, she probably won't reject it.”

“Rejected. If so, you might as well send me. It would require more effort, but the after effects would be less troublesome.”

Lumark rejected Urushihara’s suggestion immediately.

“If we send Emilia, the issue would only blow up. Depending on the reaction of the Enclosure Chief, it might turn out like Afsahan where they’ll cause another commotion to obtain Emilia’s power. You might as well send me, if any problems happen, only Saint Aire and I will be taking responsibility.”

“Wait a moment, Lumark. If we lose you now, balance might be lost within the human faction. Since the Unifying Azure Emperor has acted personally, it will be difficult to handle Afsahan even with Em, Bell, and I.”

“Fighting over power no matter the location huh... this is bad.”

Suzuno lightly sighed.

Though humanity was currently facing a crisis, it was difficult to avoid the issues related to politics and money.

If this operation, which was unknown to Saint Aire’s royal family, reached the ears of the Administration offices, which were not under Lumark’s or Emerada’s control, both of them would definitely be impeached by the Empire, removing them from the operation.

In addition, this would cause many people in the Northern Continent to become suspicious of the Western Continent and Saint Aire, so sending Lumark was a bad idea.

“With that being said, sending Emilia would be worse. The Northern Continent might give a more positive reaction because of this, but the Southern Continent will be completely excluded. And because the commotion at Azure Sky Canopy was treated as a rumor in the end, the various countries are only slightly suspecting that Emilia might be alive. Once the clans of the Northern Continent publicly declare that Emilia is still alive, Emilia would lose her

stable life forever. It might even cause trouble to the foreign world of Japan.”

“Humans are troublesome. Lord Lucifer is correct, the demonic spear belongs to Lord Adramelech in the first place. If you humans need to use some false reasoning to take it back, you might as well allow us demons to snatch it. This would not cause the human countries any trouble.”

“Well said, Farfarello, I was waiting for this kind of opinion.”

Urushihara agreed with the simple and straightforward opinion but was immediately hit on the head by Alberto.

“Wait a minute, idiot! Hey, that Malebranche over there! Did you forget that a number of your chieftains were killed by the Afsahan Militia because of this!? If the demons group together and attack the Goat’s Enclosure in this peaceful situation, the Five Continent Knight Alliance might start to seriously clear up the remaining groups of demons. If they attack the Demon Fortress, things will not be as simple as only heading to the moon.”

“Hmph, so what? Listening to the conversation so far, even if we allow you humans to handle it, it would also be impossible to retrieve the demonic spear without causing any sacrifices or trouble.”

Alberto and Lumark frowned because a demon touched a sore point.

“In the past, there were many demons in the Demon World who acted in an uncontrolled manner, and recently, the situation has been turbulent because of what we did. However, under the command of our Lord Demon King, we are already prepared to work together. But you humans prioritize the glory and honor in front of you over the future of your descendants. With this, I don’t think the Battle to Defeat God will be successful.”

“Farfarello, please do not say that. Even with that, we have already improved compared to before.”

“...Hmph.”

Farfarello did not mince his words when talking to Alberto and Lumark, but to Suzuno who had the title of Demon General, he would still show a certain level of respect and backed off obediently after being warned.

“Lord Alberto, I have a suggestion. I can go through the Doctrinal Correction Council and borrow the demonic spear from the Northern Continent with the reason of investigating the items left behind by the Demon King Army. After the battle ends, I would return it, if the minimal amount of explanation is provided, the other party should not react too badly, right?”

“We might be able to borrow it that way, but the Northern Continent would definitely send someone to travel with us. And in end, we’re not moving it to the Church Headquarters in Saint Ignord, but to the Central Continent, how do you explain this to the other party? If there is a way for the other party not to ask too much and for us to explain properly after everything has ended, then we won’t be having such a hard time.”

“...That makes sense. We are taking something which belongs to the Northern Continent after all.”

“Actually, this is a problem as well. Even if we do think of a good idea and successfully take the spear, there will definitely be someone from the Northern Continent following us. It would be alright if the other party is a reasonable person, but if the person is someone who would constantly talk about the interests of the continent or the clans, conflicts would occur before the Demon Fortress leaves the ground. In the worst-case scenario, the Western Continent and Northern Continent would fight each other while we are fighting on the moon.”

“Troublesome. Then what should we do.”

In the end, everyone’s suggestions were rejected by Alberto, causing some feelings of frustration in the meeting room.

“Then again, Alberto Ende, why do you have so little influence in the Northern Continent? Not considering Emerada Etuva, Emilia was able to have Knight General Heather Lumark take action because of her status as the Hero.”

“Annoying. I did become one of the Hero’s comrades in the end, but I was a squad leader of the Gakusen Corps before that and I carry the black mark of having lost badly to you guys. After the battle, I mainly worked together with Em in the Western Continent. In addition, a lot of things happened when fighting with you guys, which caused me to be on bad terms with the influential people in the clans.”

Alberto ranted while feeling embarrassed about it.

“In addition, not only did the current Enclosure Chief Din Dem Urs lead all the clans during Adramelech’s rule, she was the first person to suggest making his spear into a memorial. My contribution to the Northern Continent was not so significant that I can just ask such an important person to lend me the spear...”

“W-Wait a moment, Alberto-san!”

“...Huh? What is it?”

The one who interrupted Alberto with a surprised tone of voice was Lailah who had been quietly listening to the meeting so far.

“Who did you say was the current Enclosure Chief?”

“Huh?”

“Did you say that the Enclosure Chief is Din Dem Urs?”

“Yeah, that’s right...”

“Could it be that highly skilled archer who was born from the Urs branch family, and despite being the youngest daughter amongst eleven siblings, she was said to be 『born with the archery talent combined from all her other siblings』? The Din Dem I know from the Urs family is a petite person with a tough personality and says

what's on her mind, though..."

Lailah's questions caused Alberto's eyes to widen in surprise.

"Do you know her?"

The Enclosure Chief was the representative of the continent, so it was not unnatural for someone to know the representative's name or background, but Lailah knew detailed information which was unrelated to her name or background, this felt unnatural.

After Lailah glanced at Alberto with a perplexed expression on her face, she said something which surprised everyone greatly.

"After my husband and Emilia, Din Dem Urs was the last person who received a 『Yesod』 fragment from me."

"What did you say!?"

"Huh!?"

"What!?"

Suzuno, Urushihara, and Alberto, who knew the huge importance of this sentence, each shouted in their own way.

"That was something which happened around sixty years ago. When I knew her, people were still using her nickname Lidem Urs."

Lailah, who was centre of attention, could not hide her surprise and said,

"Simply put, before my husband and Emilia, Din Dem was the 『Final Hero Candidate』."

Lailah held out her right hand after saying this.

"This is a fragment of 『Yesod』 which makes up the core of Emilia's holy sword and Evil Repelling Armor."

In her hand was a small gem fragment which was so beautiful that Lumark gasped in a dazed manner.

Lailah concentrated on the fragment.

The fragment began to glow faintly, then a purple beam quietly extended in a certain direction.

The light pointed North.

Lailah closed her eyes and mumbled something in the direction of the light, only looking up and speaking after the light faded, “Mr. Alberto, Ms. Lumark, would a lot of troublesome issues be avoided if we can speak to Din Dem Urs directly?”

“Y-Yeah, of course...”

“It won’t get rid off all the problems though.”

Alberto and Lumark could not help but look at each other.

“Then let’s go.”

“W-Where?”

“Isn’t it obvious? Of course, it is to Din Dem Urs,” the purple haired angel said with determination.

“Don’t worry. Din Dem Urs still remembers me. Within the Urs clan, she is the most attuned to the sky and the land, a kind person. She will listen to our side of the story.”

※

Suzuno still harbored some unease.

In Japan after all, no matter what she did, Lailah would act carelessly in the end, causing trouble to the people around her.

Just the fact that Din Dem Urs, the Enclosure Chief, possessed a “Yesod” fragment was hard to believe, and even if it was true, it was possible that they would find out that the other party no longer remembered Lailah after paying her a sudden visit.

However, after arriving at the hall of the Theocracy’s Fiensi Church located in the corner of Fiensi via a “Gate,” there were already many men with a tough appearance unique to the North Continent dressed in their finest clothing waiting for Suzuno and

the others — more specifically, they were there to welcome Lailah, which shocked Suzuno a little.

“May I know who is Lady Lailah?”

There were four people who arrived at Fiensi from the Demon Fortress.

These four people were Lailah, Alberto, Lumark, and Suzuno.

The man who welcomed them asked for Lailah before Suzuno and the others spoke, then looked at the three females in order.

“I am Lailah.”

Lailah took one step forward, and the man who welcomed them wore a slightly suspicious expression on his face.

“I heard that Lady Lailah’s hair was silver with a tint of blue.”

“Sixty years have passed after all, there will be times where I would want to change my hair color.”

“...!”

After the commotion at Fukutoshin line, Lailah’s hair turned purple because she received demonic magic treatment from Maou.

Lailah had said that she had methods to easily reverse the change, but she did not want to go through the trouble and she did not like her original hair color in the first place, so she maintained the purple hair color.

Even so, Lailah’s attitude towards the ambassador who welcomed them was too frivolous, causing Suzuno to secretly break out in cold sweat, but the male ambassador only showed a rather surprised expression and immediately nodded in understanding.

“I see, it matches what I have heard about you.”

“How did Din Dem Urs describe me?”

“She said that you are a 『troublesome woman』.”

“Though she has aged, her tongue is still sharp.”

Lailah smiled happily.

The male ambassador did not smile and turned lightly, prompting the four of them to follow him.

“Please come with me. The Enclosure Chief is willing to meet with all of you.”

The conversation between Lailah and the male ambassador only served to confuse Alberto, Lumark, and Suzuno.

The federal capital of the Northern Continent Fiensi, commonly known as the “Goat’s Enclosure” matched its name, with various types of goats strolling around leisurely.

Other than products made from their wool, milk, or meat being sold in the busy market streets, there were also varieties larger than a normal bull or horse pulling the merchant carts.

Just then, a young lady, wearing what should be naturally-dyed bright colored clothes in the style of the mountainous people, appeared in front of them, walking a small goat like how one would walk a dog or cat, heading towards this warm-hearted scene.

The city was situated at an alpine region one thousand meters above sea level, a region with thin air and low temperatures.

As the flat land was narrow, considering the population, Fiensi’s area was not to be considered spacious and wide at all. According to Alberto, the harbor city at the south of the Northern Continent was much larger and more prosperous.

However, due to historical reasons, the Jirga was always held at Fiensi. All roads, whether they were small streets or alleys, were carefully laid with brick, with the Gakusen Corps stationed at various places to help maintain order. Most of the embassies from the other continents were also located here. Without a doubt, the spiritual center of the Northern Continent was Fiensi.

Dressed for the weather, Suzuno, Lailah, and Lumark were wearing thick and heavy clothing, but Alberto was wearing his usual leather jacket.

Because many clans from various parts of the continent had gathered here, various kinds of people could be seen walking on the streets.

They had thought that there would be many people like Alberto, with tanned skin and white hair, but some people who looked like they were from the Northern Continent had almost translucent fair skin and blond hair, and there were some other people who should have a mix of bloodlines from the Eastern Continent and Northern Continent as they appeared to look no different from the citizens of Afsahan.

The most eye-catching trait were the vibrantly colored clothes they wore.

People who were dressed like Alberto, a simple style of black from top to bottom, were in the minority, some of them were dressed in so many colors that it looked like a rainbow, and some people probably dressed in their clan colors, wearing full red or orange colored clothes.

However, these people who belonged to different clans, were all dressed in different clothing styles, using different dyes or materials. For a capital of a continent, there were really too many races of people here, allowing visitors to instantaneously get a glimpse of the local characteristic of this huge federal country made up of countless clans.

Suzuno and Lumark had come to Fiensi a few times on official business, so they were no longer mystified by this. However, the male ambassador had told them that he would bring them to the Enclosure Chief after knowing that Lailah was an angel yet moved further and further away from the bustling commercial area of Fiensi, raising their suspicions.

As the three of them felt more and more perplexed, the ambassador reached his destination.

“H-Hey, is it really here?”

Alberto could not help but ask the ambassador this.

After all, this place was less than a twenty minute walk away from the Church.

This was not a formal meeting place, but a normal restaurant serving grilled goat meat which was very common in the Northern Continent.

“Lord Alberto Ende Lanca.”

The male ambassador turned and spoke to Alberto.

“Lanca” was the last name which Alberto had been forced to abandon because he had lost to Adramelech when he was the Centurion of the Gakuen Corps.

“The leader wishes to treat you to a delicious meal.”

“...!”

This unexpected sentence caused Alberto to widen his eyes in surprise.

“She also asked our visitors from the West to try it. The leader has favored this restaurant since she was young, the whole restaurant has been reserved for today, so please relax and take your time to enjoy this.”

After saying this, the male ambassador and his companions disappeared into the crowd in the streets without even opening the door of the restaurant.

The four of them looked at each other, a perplexed expression on all their faces.

“Let’s just go in first.”

Lailah prompted the other three and opened the door first.

Inside the store, there were a few tables and chairs designed in the typical style of the Northern Continent. It was a normal looking restaurant.

There were a few spaces set aside for feasts, and within those spaces, there were a few pits containing wood stoves, allowing people to sit around these stoves.

“It’s bloody cold, come in already!”

The voice came from the stove seating furthest from the door which could not be seen from the entrance.

“?”

Only Suzuno felt surprised upon hearing that voice.

“I age just like any other normal person! The wind outside is bad for the knees, come in already!”

Being pushed on by the sharp angry shout, Lailah led the group into the shop.

The metal plate set on top of the stove was messily covered by meat and vegetables. A petite elderly person was pouring sauce onto the metal plate and stir frying the food with wooden spatulas, Suzuno had never seen any sauces which had that color.

“It’s been a while, I never expected that you would become the Enclosure Chief.”

Lailah casually struck up a conversation with the elderly person radiating a stern aura and the latter stopped moving the wooden spatulas stir frying the vegetables.

“I can no longer affectionately address you as Lidem.”

“The people who address me by that name entered the soil to become nutrients for the grass and trees long time ago, and have likely turned into mountain deer dung by now.”

The elderly person, wearing a wool hat as colorful as a rainbow looked up suddenly, glaring at the four people who stood there.

“Ugh!”

That aura caused Suzuno to suck in a breath in reflex.

This petite elderly lady wearing a monocle with embedded jewels and had a perfectly straight posture when she sat down was the Enclosure Chief Din Dem Urs.

“Don’t you know that Din Dem Urs is an elderly lady with one foot in her grave?”

Then, this elderly lady, whom Lailah addressed as Lidem, began to mercilessly interrogate Suzuno when she noticed Suzuno faltering.

“You look like an important person amongst the younger crowd in the Theocracy, but if you flinch just from a glare from an old lady like me, you won’t be able to achieve anything great in future!”

“Ah, n-no, erm...”

“Lailah! If you’re going to cut off all contact, there should be a limit to being rude and careless, don’t you think so? Waiting until I have turned old to come over, are you here to mock me? You’re still dressed as sexily as before, at least come over after you have made yourself look like an old lady!”

“This is already very plain. Lidem’s hat is fashionable and beautiful.”

“Of course! This was knitted by the youngest daughter of my third son when she was little! Of course it’s beautiful!”

As if she remembered only now, the elderly lady resumed her stir frying.

“By the way, Heather!”

“Y-Yes?”

The elderly lady, who was still glaring at the four people, changed her target to Lumark.

“You must still be single, right? How long do you think you can

stay young, when you're this age, you'll become like me in a blink of an eye, you know? Unlike that dissolute angel who is obsessed with love, we don't have that leisure of time! Quickly find a good man and settle down!"

Not only did she address the captain of the Five Continent Knight Alliance by name, she started nagging like a long winded relative.

Lumark and Din Dem Urs being acquainted with each other was not a strange fact, but this did not resemble a conversation between the Enclosure Chief, the representative of the Northern Continent, and the captain of the Five Continent Knight Alliance.

"Ah, but don't choose that idiot prince of Saint Aire! You're a good and smart woman, it would be a waste to get paired up with him! That brat was smarter when he was young."

"Uh..."

Not only that, she said these comments about the next Emperor of great Saint Aire Empire.

"There are basically no good men in the West. Those guys in Saint Ignord are about the same. Acting as if their home only has a desk, chair, and bible, posing as people of high morales, then becoming useless trash who compare the amount of gold coins and jewels in their homes with others when they grow old. People like you are needed to kick those old men in the butt to chase them back into their caves! Understood?"

"Eh-Ehh?"

Suzuno, who suddenly became a target, could only respond in a flustered manner.

"Then, the Lanca lad!"

In the end, it was Alberto's turn.

Dim Dem Urs picked up a small plate made from clay and chopsticks, moved some meat to the plate using the spatula, and

passed the plate to Alberto.

“Take it.”

“Uh... erm.”

“Take it! Taste it!”

“O-Oh.”

After being cowed by the aura of the elderly lady less than half of his height, Alberto took the plate.

“Did you parents teach you to eat while standing? Sit down quickly!”

“A-Alright!”

After being chided by the sharp voice, Alberto sat down quickly.

Suzuno’s brain could not keep up with this development which felt like an angry tide and Alberto nervously accepted the plate which was filled with meat and wooden chopsticks.

Dim Den Urs moved her chin slightly, prompting Alberto to take action, and with her prompting, the latter took one bite of the steaming meat.

“How’s the taste? I asked you to test its taste, if you stay silent, anyone can tell it doesn’t taste good.”

“...Erm.”

Alberto was confused.

The other party was the Enclosure Chief, the representative of the Northern Continent.

He had been a Centurion of the Gakusen Corps, but Alberto had only spoken with Din Dem Urs a few times.

The difference in status between the Urs and Lanca was huge, and even after using the unique value system of the Northern Continent, “the status within one’s clan,” there was an overwhelming gap between Alberto and Din Dem Urs.

However, since he was directly asked for his opinion, Alberto had no choice but to reply.

“It’s delicious. A nostalgic taste. This taste is like my grandmother’s cooking.”

“Is that so?”

In response to Alberto’s mumble, Din Dem Urs did not even twitch an eyebrow—

“A lot of hardships were pushed onto you.”

—and said this with the same tone as before.

“...Haah, on the contrary, I accumulated many good memories.”

“You can complain if you want.”

“I’m already a middle-aged uncle. If my friends see me complaining tearfully to an elderly lady, it won’t be a laughing matter.”

“Hmph, you’re not cute at all... then again, how long are all of you going to stand there in such a dazed manner!? Come over and sit down already!”

“A-Alright!”

“E-Excuse me.”

“K-Kindly allow me to join in.”

With an order from Din Dem Urs, Suzuno knelt next to the stove; Lumark had planned to kneel at first, but eventually gave up and sat in a cross-legged position. As for Lailah, she quietly picked a position which was comfortable for her and sat down.

“Oh~ so you’re that 『Deathscythe Bell』 huh. I had thought that it was an old lady with a more twisted personality, so it was a little girl.”

“Little girl... e-erm, Madam Din Dem Urs, I...”

The cooking process was different, but everyone ate the grilled Mongolian style meat which seemed to have a lot of spices added to it and allowed Suzuno to introduce herself to Din Dem Urs as the two of them had never met before. Therefore, Din Dem Urs now knew that Suzuno was the top ranked Inquisitor who had completed the most “Holy Missions” within the Doctrinal Correction Council.

“Have you been eating properly? Were you so busy with handling the moldy smelling jobs from the Theocracy that you haven’t been absorbing your nutrients properly, is that why you’re so tiny!?”

“T-Tiny...?”

By now, Suzuno would not get angry at people who criticize the “Holy Missions” given by the Theocracy, but being called tiny so directly still surprised her greatly.

“Lidem, Ms. Bell can cook very well. She has treated me to her cooking many times.”

“An angel who would turn pale just from the sight of a goat being bled out can shut up! Listen well, if you continue to be this stick thin, you’ll really turn into a death god who is all skin and bones! Eat more, especially meat!”

“E-E-Ermmm! I can eat on my own...!”

When Suzuno was feeling flustered, the best parts of the meat had already been piled up on her plate, turning into a small hill.

“What are you talking about, you ate the least among the people here! Because you eat too little meat and fish, you look like a little girl! Take a look at that Saint Aire Court Sorceress who is as small as you! Because she has always lived a luxurious life and cared only for desserts, she can’t grow taller at all! For people like her, they will become unhealthily obese when they’re old!”

Having so much meat that one would feel nauseous just looking at it caused Suzuno to feel rather frustrated, but Din Dem Urs was not

bothered at all.

Not only that, she even saw through Emerada's eating habits which people would not normally link to Suzuno, making Suzuno unable to refute her words.

“And Heather!”

“Y-Yes!”

“You're not a young girl anymore, so you have to be pickier about your wine! The wine in the West are all too sweet, none of them are drinkable! Next time, I'm going to send you some milk wine made from fresh goat milk! Drink that if you want to drink wine!”

“Uh... but I don't really like the taste of milk wine from the Northern Continent...”

“If you continue with your current drinking habits, you'll get a beer belly just like your country's royalty sooner or later! If you don't wish to end up in the wine cellars of the royal city, then cut down on fruit wine, ale, and hard liquor!”

“Hohoho, but Lidem, when you were younger, didn't you steal strong milk wine to drink in secret and got scolded by the elders in your clan after you became dead drunk?”

“It's expected. If the young people of the Urs clan cannot tell the difference between good and bad milk wine, they cannot become independent. Rather than that, Lailah, more than sixty years have passed, shouldn't you start learning how to tidy up!? Did you forget that my acts of wine stealing were only found out because you lost the wine stopper?”

“Ugh, wait a second, Lidem, that's because...”

“Hmph, from Mini-scythe's expression, it seems like your bad habits have not improved at all.”

“M-Mini... mini-scythe? Mini-scythe... Mini-scythe, isn't this a bit too...”

Obviously, this conversation was not in Japanese, so the “scythe”¹ term used by Din Dem Urs probably originated from the nickname Deathscythe, but Suzuno, whose nickname changed from tiny to Mini-scythe, could only puff up her cheeks like a child, hating the fact that her own stature had caused her to obtain a nickname which sounded like processed fish meat eaten with alcohol while binge eating in depression.



After that, Din Dem Urs' meddling grandmother topics continued without pause, and when all the meat and vegetables have disappeared from the metal plate, Suzuno and Lumark were completely exhausted.

“Ah, that’s right, I made bread stuffed with goat meat as souvenirs! Mini-scythe, Heather, both of you must eat more healthily from now on!”

““Alright...””

“...Now then.”

After giving the young people a thorough lashing, Din Dem Urs adjusted her monocle and turned to Lailah.

“Suddenly making 『that thing』 glow, was there a reason for doing so?”

“You’re only asking that now?”

Alberto commented in sarcasm as he rubbed his stomach which was close to bursting.

“I was asked to take care of this thing under strange circumstances and neglected for sixty years.”

Perhaps it was an interest of the elderly, the eyes which glared at Alberto... no, the jewels on the monocle looked very expensive.

At this moment, Suzuno and Alberto finally discovered that the frame of the monocle was emitting a dim purple glow.

“The way you used it is really pretty.”

“Of course. Because of this monocle, I was able to retain my position as Enclosure Chief. During these sixty years, this is the only thing I am grateful to you for, however...”

Now, the eyes behind the monocle glared at Lailah.

“When the 『world crisis』 you mentioned arrived, I was already too old. Thanks to that, not only am I unable to hold a bow and

arrow properly, I had to push the whole issue of handling Adramelech's army to the Lanca lad."

"Uh... I see. I don't blame you for thinking that way. However, Lidem, the true crisis is not the invasion of the Demon King Army, it is only befalling us now."

"Oh."

Din Dem Urs stared at Lailah intensely.

It was weak, but Suzuno noticed that the "Yesod" fragment glowed.

"It seems that you're not lying."

"Of course."

"You're not lying, but it's possible that you're saying something you believe it's true even if it might be a mistaken fact."

"That's not possible. Because I am one of the reasons for this world crisis."

"Oh? This does not seem to be a lie either. This means that you have come looking for me after sixty years to tell me about this. I'm curious about what kind of selfish request you would ask of me."

Din Dem Urs did not seek any confirmation from Alberto and the others and easily judged if Lailah was lying or not.

Lailah did not give the other party any time to catch their breath and moved to the crux of the matter.

"Then I'll be direct. I wish to borrow the demonic spear left behind by Demon General Adramelech. If possible, I hope that the demonic spear can be sent to the Central Continent, with only you being informed about what it would be used for."

It was only at this moment did Suzuno see Din Dem Urs' expression change for the first time.

"You're serious about that?"

It was surprise at first.

Then came the dumbfounded expression.

“Don’t be stupid. How can such a thing be done?”

“However, if this is not done, humans will perish.”

“Then we can only go to war. Since Heather and Mini-scythe have come, this means that the West is participating in this right? If you want the spear, then snatch it with your ability. Else I am unable to hand the spear over.”

“Wait a moment, Lidem! Don’t say such violent things! This is important!”

“Noisy, you stupid angel! If I hand over the spear without asking the reason simply because the one to ask was an old acquaintance, I would be criticized by all the clans, and chased off the position of Enclosure Chief! If you don’t wish to be made into minced meat and stuffed into goat intestines to be smoked, quickly get out of my sight!”

“Lidem! Please! This is very important!”

“Ah~ this is stupid! More than sixty years have passed, and the way you do things without thinking has not changed at all! In this world, there are principles which must be upheld even if the world ends tomorrow! Okay, don’t ever come again! Lanca lad, chase this idiot back to the West!”

“Lidem! At least listen to my explanation!”

From an outsider’s point of view, this scene looked like an adult granddaughter pestering a grandmother for spending money. Even if there was no one else in the shop, it was still quite an embarrassing spectacle.

“She didn’t think after all.”

“And I thought she had become more dependable, this is making me question my judgement.”

“Haah, I can understand why people want to believe in angels or gods now, Mini-, no, Crestia...”

“General Lumark! Did you plan to say 『Mini-scythe』 just now!? You wanted to say it, right!”

“I, I did not! I didn’t say it, okay! I stopped halfway!”

“That meant you planned to address me with 『Mini-scythe』 right!? I am going to lodge a formal complaint through the Demon King Army!”

“Not through the Church? What is up with you!?”

Red in the face, Suzuno protested to Lumark who was one head taller than Suzuno and one level higher in terms of her body assets, while the latter continually made excuses for the slip of her tongue.

“...Can I go back already?”

As the only male, Alberto watched these ladies of extremely high social standing argue over meaningless things, sighing lightly.

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“Oh, I roughly understand the situation now. Simply put, it’s declaring war against the moon.”

Without any change in her expression, Din Dem Urs accepted this huge incident which the humans of Ente Isla would consider earth shattering and glared at Lailah.

“Lailah, only one thing you did this time was praiseworthy.”

One hour passed after that, the metal plate had been moved away and new wood charcoal was added as everyone gathered around the wood stove for warmth. Din Dem Urs spoke with her chin resting on her hands.

“W-What was it?”

“Taking the Lanca lad, Heather, and Mini-scythe with you. If you came alone, I would have probably interpreted it as the West

wanting the demonic spear and would tell all the clans tomorrow night to guard against thieves aiming for the demonic spear. This would cause the relations between the North and West to deteriorate and eventually lead to Heather losing power.”

““.....””

Lailah and Lumark’s faces turned pale for different reasons.

“Even so, this is troubling.”

Din Dem Urs frowned and looked towards Alberto.

“Within a short period of five years, the amount of holy magic found in the holy water collected from Saint Ignord has been reduced by half. It probably isn’t because of the groundwater channels collapsing and changing paths.”

“This is the result from the investigations jointly conducted by the Church and Saint Aire’s Sorcery Management Institute, so there shouldn’t be any errors.”

“Hah. A result concluded by both the Church who claimed that Chibi Broccoli, the Institute’s Director, committed apostasy and by the Sorcery Management Institute who started to view the Church with hostility because of what the Church did. That sure can be relied on.”

““Pfft!””

Alberto and Lumark, who knew about this nickname, laughed at the same time.

“Talking about the apostasy incident from before, isn’t the relation between the Sorcery Management Institute and Doctrinal Correction Council bad?”

“...No, I was out of the country because of other matters. Therefore, my personal relationship with Director Emerada is very good.”

Suzuno’s expression was still rather stiff from being addressed as

Mini-scythe, but she still felt shocked by how Din Dem Urs knew about what was happening in the world though she lived in the Northern Continent.

To conflict with Din Dem Urs over a small matter like a nickname was not a wise move.

“Oh? An Inquisitor of the Church and the Director of Saint Aire’s Sorcery Management Institute? That is strange. Logically speaking, the interactions between the External Relations department of the Church and Saint Aire’s administration should be limited to superficial interactions only.”

“I feel that there is nothing strange about this,” Suzuno succinctly replied.

“...I see.”

Din Dem Urs smiled and looked at Alberto and Lumark in turn.

“When I saw Deathscythe Bell and Heather Lumark appear together, I should have realized it. It seems like I have gotten old after all. Hey, Lanca lad.”

Din Dem Urs pulled out a smoking pipe and tobacco box from within her clothes, rolled the tobacco in her hands and placed it on the charcoal fire.

Then she aimed the pipe at the charcoal fire and breathed in, and as she exhaled, she asked a question.

“Is Emilia doing well?”

“...”

Alberto did not answer.

But Din Dem Urs shifted her monocle once and smiled, “I see. I heard that she had died in the battle with Demon King Satan, but it was like that, huh. Seems like the rumors that she was at the scene when the old man Fu’s home was destroyed were true. Haah...”

After breathing in two to three mouthfuls of smoke, Din Dem Urs

tapped her pipe on the edge of the stove in an unruly manner, and with the sounds of tapping, she looked up towards Lailah.

“How are the two of you related?”

“What do you mean?”

“The Lanca lad had fought alongside Emilia in the past. Heather was appointed by the country to be her guardian. Mini-scythe worked under Olba. Only your relationship with Emilia is unclear. Most importantly, Emilia does not seem like the type of girl you would pay attention to.”

“...What is that supposed to mean?”

Lailah’s tone sounded a little disgruntled.

“I meant it literally. She does possess the ability to overpower Lucifer and Adramelech, but if that girl did not have the Lanca lad, Olba and the Chibi Broccoli helping her, she won’t even be capable of travelling on her own a child with only courage and not much knowledge of the world. Setting aside the title of Hero of the Holy Sword aside, I don’t think she is the kind of person who you would want to entrust this thing to.”

Seeing Din Dem Urs adjust her monocle again, Suzuno asked, “Madam Din Dem Urs, how are you using that fragment?”

Suzuno had seen the “Yesod” fragment exhibit its powers several times but had a feeling that there were no rules to the contents of the power.

Emi’s Holy Sword and Evil Repelling Armor looked like equipment summoned from the fragments, but the fragment on Alas=Ramus’ and Acies’ foreheads did not exhibit such a function.

Suzuno thought that the fragments could only emit glows to find each other, but it seemed that Lailah not only emitted the glow but established some kind of communication between herself and Din Dem Urs.

If not, the fact that there was an entourage to welcome them although Lailah did not send any ambassadors could not be explained.

But Din Dem Urs only glanced at Suzuno—

“Do you think that the leader would reveal their trump card to an outsider from the West so easily?”

And turned to Lailah again after refusing to answer.

“I don’t know how many people you gave this kind of jewel to, but I can see that all of you wish to protect Emilia. Lailah, why do you want to establish a relationship with that girl?”

“There’s nothing strange about it,” said Lailah, who then learned towards Din Dem Urs to continue, “Emilia is my daughter.”

“.....Huh?”

At this moment, Din Dem Urs opened her mouth in shock for the first time.

“A mother working hard to protect her daughter’s future, is there anything strange about that?”

“Daughter? Emilia, is your daughter?”

“That’s right.”

“This... this is too surprising. I have forgotten the last time I have felt this shocked. It’s been a long time since I doubted my ears. I see, oh~ You’re her mother, huh. Haah~ This is really...”

Din Dem Urs opened her aging eyes full wide and surveyed everyone present.

“It must have been hard on her husband, right?”

“Hey, Lidem! What is that supposed to mean!?”

“Obviously I meant that literally, ahahahaha!”

Din Dem Urs replied as if she knew Lailah would react that way.

“I see, I understand the situation now. I believe that all of you are telling the truth. However, understanding the situation and whether or not I can peacefully hand over the demonic spear to you are two different things. I understand that things would become troublesome if the world learned that Emilia is still alive, but if Emilia shows herself, the problem can be solved more easily right?”

“For Emilia’s sake, this is the only thing we will not compromise on.”

“Heather, I understand your feelings on this. But some things should be prioritized over others. That child did not call herself a Hero because she wanted to act cool or thought that it was fun to do so. There is no reason for you to neglect the lives and reputation or others because you treasure Emilia.”

Din Dem Urs’ opinion was logical, Lumark’s expression and tone of voice immediately calmed down because of this.

“The people of the North hid themselves after pushing everything to Alberto Ende, I have no need to listen to the reasoning of people like that.”

“H-Hey, Lumark.”

“Shut up, Alberto. When she said, 『A lot of hardships were pushed onto you』 just now, it meant this, right?”

Lumark glared at Din Dem Urs with a stern expression.

“It’s just like how our Church in Saint Aire established Emilia as a 『Hero』 symbol. Rather than her life and death, they were more concerned about how they could use her fame and prestige. Those clan leaders who forced you to bear the stigma of being the leader of the losing army, do you think I know nothing about what they did after you returned with Emilia?”

“...Heather, what you said really hit us where it hurts. You see, Mini-scythe, this is how you make use of information. Remember it well.”

“Did something happen before?”

“Hey, Bell, you’re asking unnecessary questions...”

“Does it matter, this is all true anyway. Listen well, Mini-scythe. In the history of the Gakusen Corps, this lad is the only commander who has lost in battle, but regardless of which leader in history was sent to battle, the result would definitely be the same. No one would have been able to defeat Adramelech’s army, so it was unavoidable. However, things turned bad afterwards. When this lad returned with Emilia, and secretly gathered the clans to fight against Adramelech, everyone began to ask about what happened at that time, some spat at him to humiliate him, some scolded him for being shameless, and some lectured him for being too arrogant for someone who had tasted defeat.”

Suzuno knew that being spat at was just an analogy.

However, from Din Dem Urs' explanation and Lumark’s criticism, these actions were not done by shallow minded young people in a fit of anger, but by people who should have been able to distinguish truth and falsehood in a fit of cowardice.

“Even so, Alberto still defeated Adramelech and pushed back the Demon King Army, and is still currently working for the sake of the humans, including the people of the Northern Continent. Since you have admitted that Alberto had been through hard times, shouldn’t you do something to repay him?”

“You’re asking me to fill up the chips which all of you are lacking? This is perplexing. This has really hit me where it hurts. And I still need to upload my promise with Adramelech. What should I do?”

“Your promise with Adramelech? What do you mean?”

Even if Lumark had spoken out of line, the Enclosure Chief did not rebuke her strongly. Alberto, who was surprised at this, asked in shock when he heard another unexpected name.

“Before Adramelech fought Emilia, he said 『If that brave young

commander comes back in the future, I hope you can express your appreciation for his contributions and reward him suitably.』”

“What...”

Alberto was so shocked that he had forgotten to breathe and could not speak at all.

“When all of you attacked Fiensi, he must have been mentally prepared for it. Of course, he did not plan to surrender, he just knew very well that nothing was absolute.”

Alberto had faced Adramelch thrice.

The first time was during the invasion of the Demon King Army, the second time was when he was banished from the Northern Continent.

The third time was during the battle where he challenged Adramelech.

Alberto, who had been unable to die as a Centurion of the Gakusen Corps, had felt that he had not been acknowledged as a warrior by Adramelech after Adramelech refused to fight with him. And this had bothered him until now.

However, from the beginning to the end, Adramelech had thought of Alberto as a commander.

Adramelech wanted Alberto to realize that he was a warrior who had to command an army who carried the hopes of humans (his comrades), so he rejected Alberto’s invitation when he sensed that Alberto was intent on dying to dissuade him.

“That guy... only letting me know about this now.”

Alberto was unable to process his emotions which had surged up all at once, and seeing him like this, Din Dem Urs pointed her pipe at Lailah.

“Haah, that’s the situation. I will try my best to help all of you. In return, don’t screw up at the eleventh hour. If a huge battle occurs

after the world has been saved, people will no longer know what they have worked hard for.”

What Din Dem Urs said should be remembered by all the humans in Ente Isla, especially in these times when Demon King Satan has disappeared from Ente Isla.

Lailah withstood her stare.

“Of course.”

“I dislike those people who are only straightforward when they are replying.”

Din Dem Urs, who would only be satisfied with a crude way of speaking mumbled this and looked towards Alberto.

“You should know, right? The Jirga is happening soon. If you want to take the spear away, it would be better to blatantly take it away when all the clans have gathered.”

“Blatantly take it away? What do you mean?”

“Do you have other people besides Emilia, Emerada, and the Lanca lad on your side?”

After suggesting that “things should be settled” when all the clans had gathered from all over the continent to participate in this huge event, Din Dem Urs said something shocking.

“I will nominate one of your people to be the next 『Enclosure Chief』. If I am the supporter, no one will object to that person’s participation. Let that person find a way to take away the spear without any lingering consequences. Therefore, all of you would have to find a candidate who doesn’t look like someone who is just leveraging on my authority to become the Enclosure Chief, and a way for the clans participating in the Jirga to give up on the demonic spear without any objections.

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The four of them who smelled of smoke and were forced to bring

back a lot of local souvenirs when they left started to rack their brains when they returned to the Demon Fortress.

“A candidate who will participate in the Jirga to become the Enclosure Chief... where can we find someone who can carry such a huge responsibility?”

Alberto scratched his head and took a bite from the bread which was a souvenir. It was stuffed with minced goat meat, a specially made sauce and vegetables.

“Up to the point of nominating a candidate for the chief, it is easily understandable. Most importantly, Madam Din Dem Urs will provide us with a stage where we can conveniently get our hands on the spear. However, the problem is...”

“That’s right, that candidate cannot make the other clans feel that [this person is just an outsider making use of Din Dem Urs' authority to take part].”

Lumark continued after Suzuno.

“In other words, even Mr. Alberto is out.”

Lailah crossed her arms with a gloomy expression on her face.

“No matter what, people will think of Emilia and Emerada when they see Alberto. In addition, he is taking over Emerada’s place, taking an official position in Saint Aire. In fact, is there anyone who can fulfill such conditions...”

If they wanted to make full use of Din Dem Urs' influence, they needed to make it look like she had not made any political deals with any country.

They could not send anyone who would give that impression to participate, but amongst the key personnel related to the Battle to Defeat God, there was no one who could take up with important task and knew everything about the situation at the same time.

“Being nominated by the leader is already an amazing feat. But

other than that, we still need to fulfill such strict conditions.”

The Enclosure Chief was the most prestigious person in the Northern Continent.

The required characteristics were different from those required of the Centurion of the Gakusen Corps, but it did not mean that military skill was completely unnecessary. In the past, there had been a few Enclosure Chiefs who were also the Centurion at the same time.

There was no need for them to be superior to everyone in all aspects, but they could not be bad at everything.

“Their character, prestige, and knowledge must be excellent. In addition, they have to be good at archery, spell casting, and horse riding, skills which are related to hunting. They also have to be unrelated to the Western and Eastern countries and understand the true motives of the Battle to Defeat God... this is too much. It's impossible for such a person to exist.”

After Lumark finished reading the requirements needed to be a candidate for leader which was handed to her by Din Dem Urs, she immediately raised her hands in surrender.

“Why don't we choose Lailah or Gabriel? They have no connections to the West and the East, right? Their fighting skill and spell casting is better than normal people.”

“Alberto, this has crossed my mind before, but it's better to avoid doing so.”

“Why?”

“They aren't cut out for it. Madam Din Dem Urs should be unwilling to nominate them.”

“...Ms. Lumark, what do you mean?”

“Honestly speaking, Madam Din Dem Urs does not seem to trust you that much. And it feels that the two of you will easily let the cat

out of the bag, we cannot rest easy like this.”

It was difficult to bring up the matter, but faced with such an honest opinion, Lailah had nothing to say in defence.

“And Gabriel still has the job of protecting the Demon Fortress, right?”

“Oh yes, there was that. Because the enemies have been very quiet recently, I almost forgot about it.”

The chances were low, but since they were unable to guarantee that Heaven would not attack, they had to assign the minimal amount of resources to protect the key to invading Heaven — the Demon Fortress.

However, their biggest fighting forces, Maou and Emi, could not be stationed here long term, so they could only assign Ashiya, Urushihara, and Gabriel, who were second to those two in fighting ability, as guards.

Ashiya and Urushihara had to go to various places to fix the Demon Fortress and handle other tasks, so if they did not permanently leave Gabriel there to stand guard, they would be unable to guarantee the safety of their camp.

“We need to guard against the humans, our enemies, and demons. They look human, but we cannot push this job to the Demon King and Lucifer who have demonic magic. With this, we can’t find any candidates who can make the old granny happy. Hey, Bell, do you have any...”

“I have a candidate.”

“Ideas... huh?”

“I have a candidate,” repeating her sentence, Suzuno caused the other three to gasp.

“That person excels in terms of character, prestige, knowledge, and has a sense for spell casting and archery. The only skill which is

lacking is horse riding, but that person knows the true motive of the Battle to Defeat God and has a close relationship with us. Only that person does not have any relations to the Western and Eastern countries and knows the true identities of Emilia and the Demon King, as well as our relationships.”

“Even knowing spells and archery, is there such a convenient person?”

Alberto felt perplexed because he could not think of any such person, but Lailah, who sensed Suzuno’s intentions, instantly turned pale.

“W-Wait a moment? Ms. Bell? What are you saying? Are you...”

“There are no other choices, right?”

“B-But if you do that, Emilia and Satan will not stand by and do nothing!”

“I won’t tell them about it.”

“Ms. Bell!?”

Lailah’s voice had turned into a scream.

“There’s no need to tell them.”

“But!”

“As long as we tell that person, that person will understand.”

“It’s too reckless! No matter what, this is too dangerous!”

“It will not be that dangerous. The Jirga is not a battlefield and is not an activity which will capture Heaven’s attention. Madam Din Dem Urs will help to take care of things, and nothing will go wrong as long as Mr. Alberto and Ms. Lailah can be the guards for the whole day. If not, we can just mention this to one of the Malebranche chieftains and they might be willing to be a guard. Farfarello and Libicocco should be happy to help.”

“T-There won’t be any problems like this... b-but.”

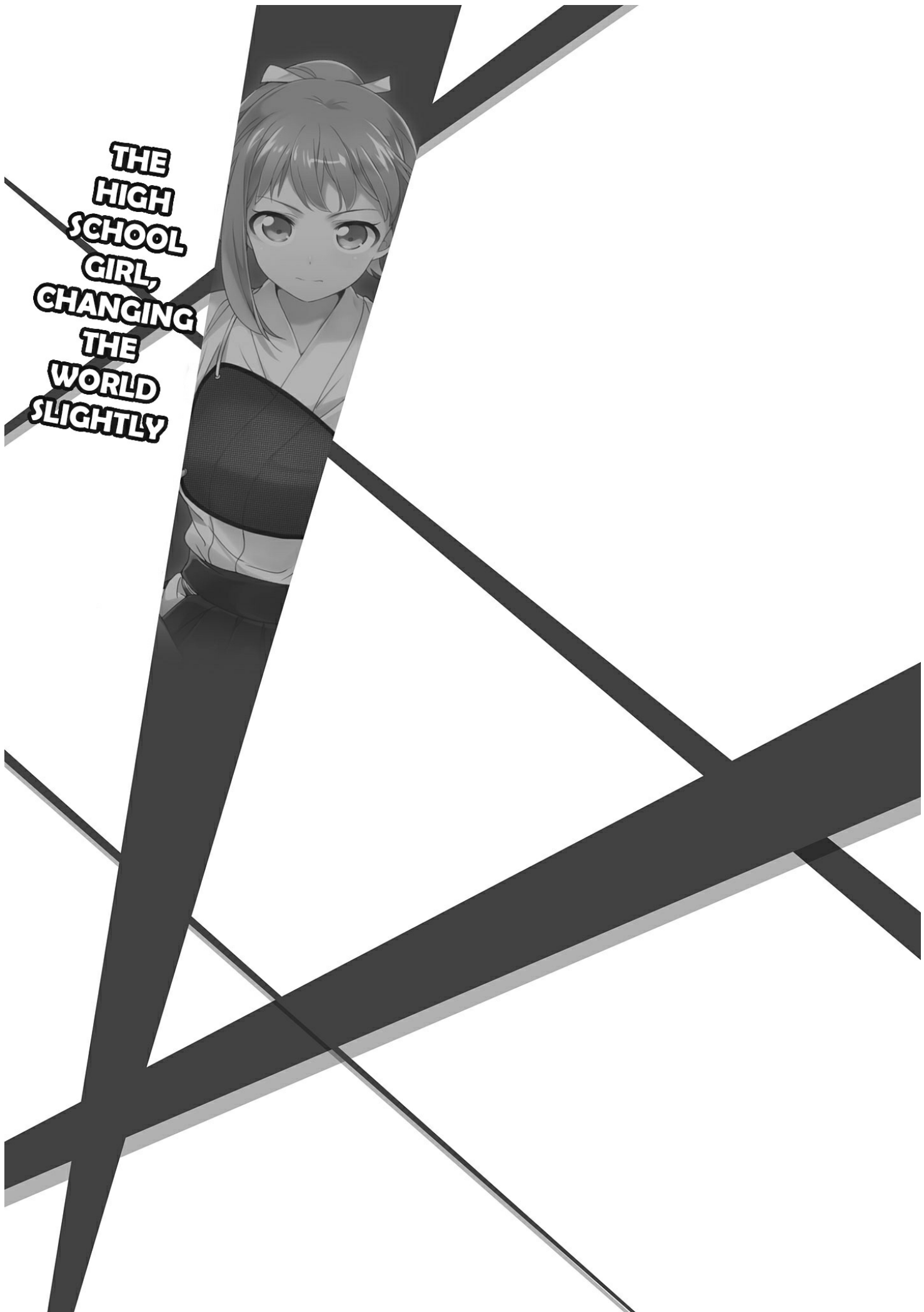
Even if Lailah was not completely agreeable, Suzuno shook her head with a slightly stern expression and said, “Of course we need to confirm whether that person is willing to help, but that person should be willing to accept.”

“W-Who are the two of you talking about?”

In response to Alberto’s question, Suzuno smirked and replied, “It’s someone Mister Alberto knows very well.”

CHAPTER 4

THE HIGH SCHOOL GIRL, CHANGING THE
WORLD SLIGHTLY



**THE
HIGH
SCHOOL
GIRL,
CHANGING
THE
WORLD
SLIGHTLY**

“Saemi, you don’t look well. Are you alright?”

“Eh? Is, is that so?”

“Yeah. It feels like you’re not getting enough sleep.”

Akiko nonchalantly asked this of Emi, who came for the morning shift.

“Uh, erm, I actually recorded too many television dramas, and I couldn’t stop after I started watching them last night,” answered the latter, trying her best to hide her surprise.

“I know right! Sometimes, you would have recorded too much and overwrite them without even watching, but sometimes, once you’ve started watching, you can’t stop because you’re too bothered about what happens next.”

“T-That’s right. I accidentally stayed up most of the night because of that.”

“Ah~ I should find some time to finish the videos I have recorded. Because my whole family is recording, the hard disk becomes full very quickly.”

“Yeah. It can really turn out like that. Ahaha...”

In fact, Akiko only correctly guessed the part about the lack of sleep. Emi, who did not want Akiko to know about the real reason, relaxed when she managed to avoid doing so.

“Sigh~ However, it’s going to get busy for both school and work. I shouldn’t have any free time for now.”

“You have to hand in reports or take exams?”

“Something like that. University students often give others the impression that they’re always playing, but after studying for real, it’s unexpectedly busy.”

“That’s true. Why would it get more busy at work though...”

“Because the turnover of the employees would become more

frequent during the beginning of spring. Because you and the others filled up the openings left by the job seeking group, we were able to barely hold on. Think about it, we still have to think about those high school students.”

“I see. Perhaps Chiho-chan would also...”

Emi did not understand the class arrangements of the high school students that well, but since the university students were in this situation, the high school students should be busy preparing for some topics or exams, just as she was thinking about this—

—Akiko continued speaking, “Rightrightright! Especially Chi-chan! If we’re missing her, it might cause a huge impact, you know?”

“Eh?!”

Emi could not help but shriek.

She did not understand why Chiho would leave?

“W-What is that supposed to mean?”

“Hm. Oh my, this is my personal deduction, I hope you won’t tell the others, but actually four days ago, I received a call from Chiho.”

“Four days ago...”

Emi looked towards the calendar hung behind the counter and remembered that she did not work on that day.

“Getting a call from her is already rare enough, but her reason for calling me was even more surprising. She was hoping that I could cover her work shifts for a few days.”

“Eh?”

Emi was very surprised.

According to the rules for the store in front of Hatagaya station, if the employees could not avoid missing work, they had to contact shop manager Kisaki.

After obtaining the permission to be absent from work, as the

employee in charge of the branch, Kisaki would find someone to replace them. It was forbidden for employees to privately change work shifts with one another.

“Shocking, right? I have never thought that Chi-chan would ever miss a work shift, so I had to ask for a reason. Then she replied in a very serious tone.”

『There is a place I must go to, this has something to do with my future path.』

“Future path...”

“Chi-chan is already in her second year of high school and would have to take exams next year. Since Chi-chan, who would never do such things normally, put it this way, it must be something rather important, so I agreed to her request. Of course, the two of us reported this to Kisaki-san later on...this means that Chi-chan is close to leaving this place.”

Akiko said in a rather troubled tone.

“I had retaken the exam once, so I don’t have any right to preach about grand ideals, but during periods like this, everyone should have started to prepare. There are some people who think that it’s not too late to start preparing in third year, but considering that the university entrance exams for this year have already ended, their own exams will take place in less than one year.”

“So that means they have to start attending private classes soon?”

“I didn’t ask that much, but it’s probably something like that. Kisaki had a thoughtful expression as well.”

Ah, Kisaki must have seen many high school employees leave.

Before employees start to leave, there must be some signs or trends. Since February is very close to the transition of one year to the next, there will definitely be many changes. **|1|**

Amongst those, the high school employees, beginning to attend

tuition classes since the start of spring break to prepare for their exams, will quit their part time jobs. This was a common phenomenon in Japan.

“I see... Chiho-chan is...”

In a strange way, Emi knew that Chiho was a high school student, but could not imagine her attending tuition classes.

This did not mean that Emi knew other high school students besides Chiho, but because Chiho displayed a personality and ability which was very different from young men and women of her generation, Emi felt that she would not do such shallow things.

However, Chiho was still a normal girl who was born in Japan.

Ever since Chiho got involved in matters related to Ente Isla, she had overcome many commotions, and developed outstanding mental strength.

Even Emi and Suzuno, who experienced many more battlefields compared to Chiho, thought so.

So somewhere in Emi's heart, she had decided that Chiho would not wait until now to feel that she had to change herself because of something like university entrance exams.

Emi had held onto the belief that Chiho would continue staying by her side.

“Thinking like this is truly selfish.”

Obviously, even if Chiho quit her job to prepare for exams, this did not mean that she would cut off all ties with MgRonalds and Emi and the others, it was just that the distance between them would increase a little.

The Battle to Defeat God in Ente Isla have caused Maou and the others, Emi and Suzuno to leave Sasazuka little by little.

Maou had said that he would settle everything before July, but Emi could not predict how the situation would be like at that time,

and at that time, Chiho would have started to spend her summer holidays of her third year of high school.

It was a period where she had to focus all her spirit on exams.

Even if Maou and the others returned to Room 201, everyone would be unable to gather as frequently compared to before.

“Thank you for waiting. This is the store in front of Hatagaya station, my name is Yusa. It’s a customer asking for delivery...”

At this moment, the specialised headphones Emi used received a call, and after motioning to Akiko with her eyes, she turned to the computer used for deliveries.

“...Alright. Your choice for sauce is barbeque, I understand. Will this be all... thank you. I will repeat your order now, please confirm this...”

Chiho was going to leave Emi’s daily life.

This felt like strange thing, but thinking about it carefully, the fact that she was wearing a MgRonalds uniform and answering calls at the MgRonalds in front of Hatagaya station was proof that “daily life” could easily change because of small things.

Emi’s circumstances were a little special, but she had also changed her workplace because of personal reasons.

As a result, the interactions with the friends she made at her previous workplace — Suzuki Rika and Shimizu Maki — had decreased in frequency.

This was a classic example of how the distance between people could increase because of changes in their daily life.

“Alright, then please wait for twenty minutes... alright, thank you for your patronage. Excuse me... haah... there’s a delivery. Maou-san, please send a delivery to Sasazuka Street X.”

As Emi thought about unimportant things, she finished her work efficiently, changed her mic to the frequency used within the store

and gave instructions to Maou, who could now do deliveries.

『Understood, I'm coming down now. Aki-chan, I'm leaving the upstairs counter to you for the time being. 』

Maou responded immediately, and Akiko also went upstairs to replace Maou after receiving the instructions.

Akiko did not have any barista certification, but in MgRonalds, barista was just a position of honour, if they knew the method, even those with rich experience, such as Akiko and Kawada, could take up the work at the MdCafe.

After Maou went downstairs, he took a look at the address printed on the order, then browsed the delivery map stuck on the wall next to the cupboard where the Moped keys were placed.

“Oh, this area huh. There are many small alleys in that place, so it's a bit difficult to find. Many of the apartments look similar too.”

Without any special reason to do so, Emi looked at Maou's side profile as he frowned and carefully confirmed the route, and was suddenly curious if Maou knew that Chiho was changing shifts with Akiko.

However, Maou had to head out soon, and it was not a good time to ask him this question, so Emi swallowed this question and started to prepare the meals in the delivery order.

She did not know how Maou would react if Maou sensed that the distance between him and Chiho have increased more than now.

Ever since Chiho went to Ente Isla, Emi felt that the distance between her and Chiho had decreased, so even if Chiho quit her job to prepare for exams, she did not think that the two of them would suddenly grow distant.

Emi had not thought about what she wanted to do after the Battle to Defeat God, as long as she wanted to, she could continue to live in Japan by her own choice, and following Chiho's footsteps, study diligently to attend a Japanese university.

But Maou was different.

As the Demon King, after the Battle to Defeat God, he had a duty to continue leading the demons.

If Maou was hired to become a full-time employee at MgRonalds, and planned to work at both his jobs as a full-time employee at a Japanese business and a Demon King in Ente Isla, he could not continue living a poor and leisurely life in Villa Rosa Sasazuka.

In this case, how did Maou plan to maintain his relationship with Chiho?

“...No.”

Thinking to this point, Emi shook her head to dispel the strange thoughts in her mind.

The relations between humans and demons have improved temporarily, but this did not mean that things were harmonious between the human and demon world. In fact, Maou had not atoned for the invasion.

Putting aside how relations between Maou and Chiho would change, why was she calmly predicting Maou's future where he continued his duty as Demon King?

“...It would be good if he could quickly become a full-time employee and decide to bury himself in this country.”

“Hm? Did you say something just now?”

Maou had been examining the map seriously, but maybe because he had heard Emi mumble, Maou suddenly turned in her direction.

“Nothing, I didn't say anything. Rather than that, I have prepared all the items. I'm leaving it to you to handle it.”

After the burgers and fries have been prepared, Emi placed the drinks which have been filled with ice into the bag and passed the delivery bag to Maou.

“Ah. Oh yeah, Emi.”

“What is it?”

“You don’t look well today. Are you lacking sleep?”

Maou picked up the windbreaker and helmet used for deliveries and asked this at the same time, as for Emi—

“I’m alright! Hurry up and go!”

“O-Oh. Then I’m leaving the store in your care.”

She replied in a forceful tone, and as if she was chasing Maou away, she pushed him out.

Listening to the sounds of the moped fading away in the distance, Emi sighed lightly.

Lacking sleep, just like what Akiko said, Emi did not sleep well last night.

She would never let others know that the reason for it had to do with Maou--no matter what, that she would never spill.

Ever since that night she had listened to Suzuno saying strange things, Emi was forced by Alas=Ramus to think about “what kind of chocolate to give Papa.”

No, to say that she was being forced was only her trying to push away the responsibility.

Even if it turned out like this, the person who caused Alas=Ramus to have such thoughts was Emi herself.

“...Did I malfunction again?”

Why did she ask Alas=Ramus such a thing at that time?

Earlier on, Chiho’s friend suggested that as long as Alas=Ramus made chocolates, and gave them together with Chiho, it might not pile any pressure on Maou.

After Emi heard about this, Emi thought in reflex that if Alas=Ramus planned to make chocolates, she would have to make them with her.

At this point, everything was still alright.

Even if Alas=Ramus said that she wanted to make chocolates, but the one to help Alas=Ramus who was still a child would be Emi, so in the end, the chocolates given to Maou would be a product made by both Alas=Ramus and Emi.

Considering the bond between a young daughter and her mother, this was a very natural thing to do, so even if Maou knew that Emi had helped in making them after receiving the chocolates, Emi did not think that Maou would think anything of it.

Nevertheless.

Even with this, she could not help thinking.

What kind of chocolates would make Maou happy--and why she would think about this.

Was it because Alas=Ramus had a rare chance to make chocolates, so Emi hoped that the product would make Alas=Ramus' Papa happy?

Or was it because she wanted to make decent chocolate to shock Maou?

Or was it because she wanted to properly provide cover for Chiho who was a good cook, and wanted to make chocolate which would not lose out to Chiho's?

Or...

“...Haah, this is stupid.”

She wanted to do something for Maou.

“Seriously, this isn't funny.”

If this was a malfunction, there should be a limit to how much she can malfunction.

What good would thinking about this do for her.

“Does it matter? As long as I say that Alas=Ramus made it, that guy

would definitely be very happy. That would be enough.”

Emi seemed to be saying this out loud to convince herself, then switched her mood to continue working.

Even if she saw that the date shown in the corner of the LED screen at the counter was 13th February, she was not bothered at all.

Even if it was Valentine’s Day tomorrow, she was not affected at all.

Just as she was thinking of this.

“Welcome... eh?”

Just as Emi wanted to shift her mood, a customer came, and the customer was someone she knew very well.

“Hi, is business doing well?”

“Welcome, Rika, you come here to eat?”

“Hm~ that’s how it turned out in the end.”

The person who came, Emi’s good friend, and one of the few people in Japan who knew about Ente Isla — Suzuki Rika, replied in a vague manner.

Rika was wearing a camel coloured long coat and white pants, pulling a small luggage used for short trips.

Just as Emi felt perplexed about Rika’s attire, the latter said something surprising.

“Erm, I don’t think I see Maou-san anywhere, he should be working today, right?”

“Eh? Uh, he went out for delivery... are you looking for him?”

“Yeah. Thinking about it, Emi and Maou-san knock off at 6pm today right?”

After saying another strange sentence, Rika looked at her watch.

It was 4pm now. It was still a little early for dinner, but compared to that, Rika had mysteriously known Maou's and Emi's schedule.

"After both of you knock off, I hope that the two of you can come with me to a place."

"Maou and I?"

"Yeah. Ah, I will slowly eat my meal here and wait for the two of you, so there's no need to rush. Ah, I would like to have the pork katsu burger meal, with fries and hot red tea. Ah, I have coupons."

"Eh, ah, al-alright, I understand, please wait a moment..."

Rika did not answer Emi's question, and after ordering quickly, she stepped aside to allow the customers who had began to queue behind her to take the spot in front of the counter.

Obviously, Emi had to serve those customers and when she came to her senses, Rika had already sat at a seat near the back of the store.

After Rika waited for around 15 minutes, Maou returned to the store.

He walked into the store, the delivery bag and helmet tucked under his armpits, and immediately noticed that Rika was sitting at one of the seats.

"Suzuki Rika came?"

"Yeah, she came just now. erm, she seems to be looking for us for something."

"She's looking for me as well?"

"It seems to be so."

Maou seemed like he had no idea what it was all about.

"Sigh, forget it. I'll be ending work in about an hour anyway. Nothing much happened right?"

"Yeah, no issues occurred within the store. No one bought

anything from the MdCafe when you were gone too.”

“I see.”

Maou nodded and placed the keys, helmet and windbreaker at their designated locations, and went up to the second floor after carefully washing his hands.

“Rika?”

Emi noticed that Rika was staring intently at Maou as he climbed up the stairs, and when she was unable to see his back any longer, she hung her head in fatigue.

Rika had come to the store a few times, but this was the first time Emi saw her act the way she did today.

“Ah~ luckily for me, no one ordered any difficult to make coffee before Maou-san returned.”

Akiko, who took Maou’s place downstairs, said this, then went to the back of the store to handle other tasks.

“...It feels strange.”

Rika was currently acting strange in front of her, and Chiho did something she would not normally do.

Emi, who felt uncomfortable—

“Ah... fu.”

—swallowed back the yawn which threatened to come out.

At this moment, a customer walked towards her from the front door.

She could not open her mouth in a yawn in front of the customer.

Tracing back to the root cause, the reason why she felt like yawning, was because she might have to give chocolate to Maou.

Having pushed her own issues aside, did she really have any right to say that Rika and Chiho were acting strange?

After all, the person acting the strangest was definitely her.

“Welcome! After you have made your decision, please make your order here.”

Emi gathered up her motivation and greeted the new customer in an especially cheerful voice.

“Sorry for coming here so suddenly to look for both of you.”

“It’s fine, then again, where are we headed to now?”

The three of them were walking on Maou’s usual route home. Emi and Maou watched Rika’s back as she walked in front of them with confused expressions.

“Ah, yeah, the place we’re going to is very close by, do you mind walking a little?”

“I’m alright with it...”

“Hey, regardless of where we’re going, I want to return to the apartment first.”

Maou said this as he pushed his bicycle, and Rika looked back, nodding.

“Alright, that’s fine, because the location is near Maou-san’s house.”

“Near my house? Where is it?”

“Oh my, you’ll know when you reach it. Ah, Emi, Alas=Ramus-chan is with you today, right?”

“Eh? Yeah, that’s right.”

Suzuno and Urushihara could not free up any time today at all, and since she could leave work at an early time of 6pm, even if she felt bad for Alas=Ramus, the two of them had been in a merged state all day.

“Yeah, that’s good. Sorry, the people waiting there told me not to

tell the two of you anything until we have reached the destination.”

““Huh?””

Maou and Emi grew more confused.

The destination was near Villa Rosa Sasazuka, yet both of them had no idea what Rika’s destination was.

The most likely possibility would be Shiba’s house next door, but if it was that place, there would be no need to make things this troublesome.

Listening to the wheels rolling along the pavement, the two of them started to become curious about what was inside Rika’s luggage.

Currently, Rika looked like someone who was taking a trip some place and staying there for one night, but it should not be to Villa Rosa which was completely empty.

In the end, with this kind of strange situation, they were brought by Rika to Villa Rosa Sasazuka.

“...Hey, so where are we going?”

Maou parked his bicycle and asked this again.

“Oh my, I won’t harm you guys. Ah, the person there will treat you to a meal, so there’s no need to worry about dinner.”

“Dinner? Which restaurant are we going to?”

Emi asked in reflex, but immediately sensed that Rika had spoken rather strangely.

If the destination was a restaurant, Rika should have said “we’re going there to eat” from the beginning.

“Calling it a restaurant... isn’t quite right. However, that place has food which isn’t normally found here. Uh, please don’t ask me anything first and just make preparations for going out. If you feel that it’s boring there, you can come back immediately. In return, I

will make it up to you two properly.”

Rika put her hands together and pleaded with them.

“...I understand. Seriously, it’s hard to deal with you.”

Maou frowned, but since he was sick of eating at the nearby eateries, he felt that even if he did not know the details, he would just treat it as going out to eat an exotic dinner.

Since the person who invited them was Rika, they would not be taken to meet some strange person.

There were many concerning points, but Maou still agreed to go out together. He asked the other two to wait downstairs then climbed up the public staircase.

Just as Maou disappeared into the corridor on the second floor, Rika actually picked up her luggage and climbed the stairs quickly.

“Hey, Rika?”

Emi quickly followed behind, and Rika actually had the time to turn around to check if Emi was following.

After entering the common corridor earlier than Emi, Rika actually barged into Room 201.

“Wait a moment! H-Hey, what are you doing!? Didn’t I ask the two of you to wait for me downstairs?”

In the room, Maou, who had been planning to take the down jacket used for going outside from a hanger on the wall, shouted this in surprise, and what further surprised Emi, who followed behind, was that Rika was stepping on the tatami while still wearing her shoes.

“Sorry, I’m moving this a bit.”

Rika moved the new futon spread out in the middle of the room to the side.

“Hey, what are you doing!”

“Wait a bit, I’m almost done.”

“What do you mean, almost done.”

“Kya?”

At this moment, Emi’s scream was heard from the common corridor outside, giving Maou a shock.

However, before he could ask what had happened, Acies rushed in through the porch carrying Emi in her arms.

“Oh, Acies, nice timing!”

“Yep!”

Rika held up her thumb and Acies winked in reply.

“Hey! What is the meaning of this? Explain already!”

“Alright alright, it’s troublesome to pull away the tatami anyway, so excuse me, we’ll just settle it here.”

Rika did not answer Emi’s and Maou’s questions and from within her coat, she pulled something completely unexpected out.

“Yosh.”

Rika gathered up her spirits and stuck that thing into the gap between the tatami.

“Rika?”

Of course Emi would be surprised. Because the object Rika took out was the Angel Feather Pen which allowed anyone to use the “Gate.”

The place where the feather was stuck in became a spring of light, the tatami in the middle of the six-tatami sized room glowed in an otherworldly manner. By the way, even the ends of the futon which had been moved to the side sunk slightly into the light spring.

“Uohh, did I do that? Uohh, I feel like a magician, I’m so excited! Ah, that’s right, Maou-san’s shoes.”

Rika seemed to have finally remembered something and returned to the porch to grab Maou's shoes—

“Ah? Hey?”

And threw them into the light spring without saying anything.

“Alright, follow me, everyone.”

Then she jumped into the “Gate” together with her luggage.

In response to Rika's sudden actions, Maou and Emi could stay where they were, completely stunned and speechless.

“W-What do we do?”

“How should I know, hey, Acies, put me down! I have to go after Rika...!”

“Don't worry, Emi! Even if you didn't say so, I'll go after her!”

“Ah? Eh? W-Wait a moment, Acies, wait... kyahh?”

Looking like she could not resist at all, Emi was pulled into the “Gate” by Acies.

This crazy situation caused Maou to freeze on the spot for a few seconds.

“W-What is going on. Uh, keys, I have to remember to lock up... hey, wait for me!”

After suddenly coming back to his senses, Maou locked the porch door and after running helter-skelter around the room for a while, he decided to jump into the “Gate,” and even if he was heading to Ente Isla, for some reason, he still carefully checked if he brought his wallet and mobile phone.

“Hey, wait for me!”

Within the “Gate,” Maou chased after Rika, Emi and Acies who were far away and gradually turning smaller, trying his best to cross the passage of time and space.

“Ahh, damn it! If only I could use the Angel Feather Pen!”

As a demon, Maou could enter the “Gate” which was opened by Rika with the Angel Feather Pen, but if he wanted to move forward inside, he had to cast another Gate opening spell.

This was completely different from the “Gate” Maou used to move between Ente Isla and Earth.

It was impossible for Rika, who did not possess any holy magic, to create such a stable “Gate.”

“...Hm?”

At this moment, a peculiar question surfaced in Maou’s mind.

This question was more fundamental and puzzling than why Rika was acting this way.

The material for the Angel Feather Pen came from the feathers of an archangel and demons were unable to use it.

This was information Maou received from Lailah when he was young, and after testing it out, he discovered that regardless of how many times the demons pierced it into the ground, nothing would happen, but just like what he saw just now, as long as it was not a demon, even someone from Earth like Rika could easily use it.

The Ente Isla sorcerers who spent a lot of effort developing the “Heaven Stairs” and the especially difficult “Gate opening spell” might become angry after hearing this, but this was not the time to be concerned about such things.

If a “Gate” connecting faraway planets could be opened so easily.

“...Why did the citizens from those guys’ home planet not open 『Gates』themselves?”

※

“Yosh... wahhh.”

“Hah!”

“Kya!”

“Eh?”

After forty minutes of travelling between planets, Rika, Acies, Emi and Maou arrived in sequence to—

“...This place is?”

A place which was not the Demon Fortress in the Central Continent.

“W-Where is this place?”

Emi and Maou had no impression of this place.

They had no impression, but they knew which facility they had arrived in.

“Church... no, this shouldn't be a church from the Theocracy right?”

“What did you say?”

What Emi said gave Maou a shock, and he stared at Rika who had brought them to this place.

Now that it was mentioned, the designs around them did resemble the churches of the Theocracy which he had seen in the various cities in the Central Continent.

“H-Hey, Acies! Suzuki Rika! What are the two of you planning...”

“Oh, everyone's here?”

However, before Rika could answer, a voice was heard from below them.

“Al, Alberto.”

“...W-Who's the person beside him?”

Alberto was standing there, along with a big sized, sturdy man whom Maou and Emi did not recognize.

The man was taller and sturdier than Alberto, and Alberto had a large build.

His gaze was fierce and intimidating, but his hair was, for some reason, styled into a centre parting with hair wax or hair gel.

“We succeeded!”

“Hello, sorry for coming late.”

In place of Maou and Emi, who did not know what to do because of the series of events which confused them, Acies and Rika easily approached the two men.

“As long as everything went well. Bell and I were worried if you could bring them over smoothly.”

“Oh my, I was really nervous! I was so worried if I could really use that Angel Feather Pen, it felt like my heart was going to leap out of my throat.”

“Don’t say that, you did very well. You even landed properly when you came out of the ‘Gate.’”

“Sigh~ I’m so tired, so nervous.”

“Oh my, Rika did things so efficiently! It doesn’t look like it was your first time at all!”

“What, who, wait, this.”

“What, who is he, wait a moment, what is this?”

Maou and Emi asked similar questions at the same time.

The only unfamiliar man walked up to the two of them who were utterly confused and knelt respectfully in front of Maou.

“My deepest apologies, Lord Demon King.”

““Huh?””

The large sized man who looked like an american football or rugby player knelt and lowered his head and addressed Maou as Demon King.

This mean he was a demon.

“Y-, You’re...”

“I may look like this now, but I am Libicocco.”

“Li-, Libicocco?”

Hearing the name of a Malebranche chieftain in an unexpected place gave Maou a huge shock, but thinking about it carefully, Farfarello had appeared in Japan before in human form.

It seemed like Libicocco, who was considered rather large amongst the Malebranches, had turned into his human form.

“Acting on the orders of Lord Eastern Demon General and Lady Crestia Bell, I was entrusted with the important duty to serve Lord Demon King.”

“Ashiya and Suzuno?”

First it was the mismatched group of Alberto, Libicocco, Rika and Acies, and after knowing that this was planned by Ashiya and Suzuno, Maou and Emi grew more and more confused.

“Oh my, those are really good expressions on your faces.”

Alberto saw through their states of confusion and said this with a grin.

“Let me tell you where this is first, this is the Goat’s Enclosure in the Northern Continent. In other words, this is the Theocracy’s church in Fiensi.”

“N-Northern Continent?”

“Isn’t Fiensi the federal capital of the Northern Continent? Why did Suzuki Rika bring us here!”

“Oh my, if I, Em or Bell were the guide, the two of you would probably lose your temper halfway. Once we mentioned that we needed someone who would not reveal anything no matter what was asked to be the guide, Bell said Ms. Rika was very suitable and introduced her to us.”

“Luckily, Acies was willing to help. Ah~ these forty minutes aren’t good for the heart. Sigh, it was not as bad as the first time I heard about it though. Then again, this place is really cold.”

As she spoke, Rika opened her luggage.

There were many cosmetics and clothes to protect against the cold, it seemed like she planned to stay the night.

“Hey, Maou and Emi should stop daydreaming! We’re not rushing for time, but the vendors have limited food! Lailah will save seats for us, we should go already!”

“W-Wait, wait a moment first! You said Lailah is here too? Hey, how much are all of you going to confuse us until you’re happy! What exactly is going on? What are your motives?”

Because no one was willing to give Maou and Emi a proper explanation, they only felt more confused, but the shocking sentence Rika said at the end was so impactful that it was enough to overthrow the existing confusion they felt.

“They’re going to hold the archery ceremony, which is the most exciting event in the Jirga. Because Chiho-chan signed up for this ceremony, everyone has to go to cheer her on.”

“Wha.....”

“What.....”

The word to describe this kind of situation would be “speechless.”

The Jirga, a huge conference to pick the Enclosure Chief for the Northern Continent, was made up of a few stages, and Chiho actually signed up for the archery ceremony?

Maou and Emi could not comprehend how things ended up like this.

“Sigh, seeing is believing.”

Alberto waved at the stunned pair.

“That young lady’s results are pretty good.”

“Ah, both of you, come sit here!”

Within the crowd, Maou and Emi heard a voice calling for them.

This was Fiensi’s Central Plaza.

The Adramelechinus’ Demonic Spear which was taller than any of the towers at the plaza, the only weapon which was worthy of being wielded by Adramelech, the clan leader of the Ashen Horns, formed a shadow under the afternoon sun, overlooking the peaceful world.

The competition grounds, that had seats, was in the middle of the plaza and there was an elaborately decorated wooden stage prepared for the archery ceremony.

The stage and the archery bow formed one line, and the audience seats which were positioned parallel to this line were almost full. One of the areas had seats which were covered in diamond shaped mats similar to the separated seats in sumo competitions, those were VIP seats which allowed people to freely take these seats within a certain timeframe.

As Lailah was waving from one of the seats with a mat, Emi and Maou walked through the audience, one in front of the other, and headed to that place.

The archery ceremony had already begun, and a lot of young people were carrying the hunting bows of the Northern Continent, showing off their archery skills on the stage.

There was a gambling ring being set up in the corner of the audience seats, there were many names and some numbers written on the large board and as each contestant shot one arrow, the numbers below will change, and the people around it would show happiness or uneasiness according to the numbers.

It was a large conference to choose the Enclosure Chief of the

Northern Continent, but the area was filled with a festive atmosphere and Emi and Maou forced their way through the crowd in the midst of the bustle.

“It’s good you made it in time. Ms. Chiho’s group will be going up in thirty minutes ugh...?”

After reaching Lailah’s side, who had been smiling leisurely, Emi walked to the mat covered seats without even taking off her shoes and without giving Lailah any time to explain, grabbed the front of Lailah’s blouse.

“What is going on?”

“Eh, uh, ermwah?”

Maou, who was following closely behind Emi, also grabbed Lailah’s head with force.

“You finally crossed that boundary that shouldn’t be crossed.”

“Ah, b, both of you wait a moment! This is scary! Everyone is looking! Everyone is looking!”

“I don’t care.”

“Who cares about them.”

“W-Wait a moment! This might look like I’m looking for excuses but at the beginning I was actually against it and said it was too reckless and wanted to stop everyone from involving Ms. Chiho but Ms. Bell who suggested it and Ms. Chiho who knew about this were very eager to try this and even said that it has to be kept a secret from the two of you until today which was why I couldn’t say anything honestly speaking I thought that it was impossible for Ms. Chiho to advance and become a candidate in the Jirga but Ms. Chiho said that if she made it to the end of the archery competition she wanted the two of you to come and watch so I really didn’t do anything this time in fact I was on the side which was against it please believe me it huuuurts even though the others besides you two agreed with it I was against it to the end because I heard that

the two of you were very angry when I did something similar at the Tokyo Tower so the one to convince Mr. Alsiel who also protested to the end was Ms. Chiho herself both of you please let go of me I can't breeeeeaaaattheahhh!"

Lailah, using her last breath from being grabbed by the front of the blouse by Emi to make all her excuses, became paler and paler, so Emi and Maou decided to let go first.

However, they still could not accept it.

"You said this was Bell's suggestion?"

Emi was speaking in a low voice filled with a killing aura which even Maou had not heard much, causing Lailah to turn even paler even after she had recovered her breathing.

"Fu~ t-that's right, b, both of you should understand right, su~ even if we ask the people of the Northern Continent, fu~ to hand the demonic spear over, su~ the other party would not do so obediently, pfu~"

The one who left the demonic spear here was Emi.

Obviously, she never told anyone how to use it afterwards, and during this operation to recover the four items of the Ancient Demon King's Legacy, only the location of this spear had been clearly known from the start, but as long as mistakes were made when recovering it, this could leave negative consequences on the human world, Emi knew that very well.

Therefore, while understanding this point, the two of them had told everyone beforehand that they would provide as much help as possible when recovering the demonic spear.

Especially for Emi, she had been mentally prepared to personally make an appearance to borrow the demonic spear from the Enclosure Chief if no other methods could be found.

Before firming up the plans for the recovery of the demonic spear, she had already been prepared for the possibility, knowing that the

others were probably unable to think of other good methods.

Therefore, she kept thinking if there were any other ways to convince Din Dem Urs, the Enclosure Chief of the Northern Continent, and the elders of the other clans not to excessively spread the truth about the Battle to Defeat God and solve this issue without leaving any negative political consequences.

However, for some unknown reasons, it ended up with Chiho having to participate in the Jirga.

“The Demon King and I did not want Chiho-chan to face more danger, why did all of you do this...”

“Phrasing it that way is too cruel to Chiho. The whole time, she has been a sensible child, it’s fine to allow her to do things she wants to do.”

“Eh?”

“W-Who are you?”

As Emi was speaking with gritted teeth, her veins close to bursting, a voice was heard from the side.

An unfamiliar elderly lady suddenly appeared within the area of mat covered seats, she stared in the direction of the archery ceremony and said,

“Oh, this is surprising.”

The monocle wearing elderly lady looked towards Maou.

“You’re Demon King Satan?”

““!””

Maou and Emi sucked in a breath at the same time.

“This is the first time we’re meeting, yes? Mini-scythe surprised me, but you look rather young too. For a king, you lack some aura. Have you been eating well?”

“Who are you?”

Maou was intimidated by the mysterious aura of this petite elderly lady, but Emi, who had met her once before, shouted after seeing this unexpected person, unable to hide her shock,

“Could you be Madam Din Dem Urs?!”

“Long time no see. To avoid any trouble, I’m not going to address you by name. I don’t know if we’re going to be overheard after all.”

The Enclosure Chief who ruled the Northern Continent, Din Dem Urs, spoke with her back facing Hero Emilia.

Before that, she had nonchalantly said “Demon King Satan,” but there had been some distance between each mat covered seat, and the surroundings were completely immersed in the bustle of the festival and the expectations of the archery ceremony.

Even the attention which Maou and Emi attracted when they grabbed Lailah had been drowned out by the festive atmosphere.

No, looking around them carefully, the seats on their left were occupied by Acies, Libicocco, Aices and Rika.

The seats to their right were empty.

“Din Dem Urs, hey, isn’t that the name of the Enclosure Chief?!”

Maou, who just found out the identity of the elderly lady, got a huge shock, but the person involved glared at Maou as if she thought he was too noisy.

“Your voice is too loud. Stop saying stupid things and sit down already. It’s rare to witness the signature archery ceremony of the Jirga. Because experts from various clans have gathered, a gambling ring was set up too. I took the effort to save the best seats for the two of you, it’ll be a waste not to watch it.”

“Madam Din Dem Urs, what is going on here?”

Emi questioned Din Dem Urs, who had suddenly appeared, in an agitated manner.

“You’re asking me what’s going on, it’s you guys who said you

wanted the demonic spear right? The Northern Continent cannot hand over the demonic spear for no reason, but it's a key campaign which determines if humans will go extinct or not, so I can only help to prepare a situation where all of you can smoothly obtain the demonic spear as soon as possible."

"H-Help to prepare..."

"I roughly know about what you have experienced during the past two years. The Hero and Demon King watched over each other in a foreign world and gave birth to a daughter, and now you're planning to declare war on God to save your daughter's friends."

This explanation was too simple and sounded really misleading, but it could be confirmed that Din Dem Urs was aware about Maou's and Emi's life in Japan.

"Logically, I should be rejecting this idiotic request of handing the demonic spear over to all of you, but this is a request from an old friend after all, so I have no choice but to render my assistance. For the two of you, who were not informed about this, this must leave a bad taste in your mouth, but a Hero will not be the main character every single time. So give up on that idea."

After saying this, Din Dem Urs slowly swept her gaze over the spacious plaza.

"Those important people from all over the continent who want the troublesome position of Enclosure Chief have gathered at this Jirga, there are also guests from the other continents, so the security here is tighter than normal. In addition, my youngest granddaughter has signed up for the archery ceremony, so the security around her will naturally be even tighter. To avoid bringing shame to your status, both of you should just calm down, sit down, and cheer my granddaughter on."

"Hey, old lady, don't go creating an atmosphere that this topic has already ended. We have not heard any satisfactory answers at all. Who planned this kind of thing when Emi and I were not around."

“That’s right. I can’t accept this!”

“Huh?”

Even so, Maou and Emi were unwilling to let things go. As if she found the two of them too noisy, Din Dem Urs glanced at them and spoke to Lailah,

“Lailah, your daughter and son-in-law are not magnanimous at all! Was she raised to be so conservative because she had a mother like you?”

““Who the heck is the son-in-law!””

Emi and Maou rebuked at the same time.

“Then again, Lailah, what is this? You know Madam Din Dem Urs?”

“Uh, she’s one of my old friends.”

“Idiot, who the heck is your friend. Just like the two of you, I received this partner from Lailah.”

After saying this, one of the jewels embedded on Din Dem Urs' monocle glowed faintly.

“Oh?”

Following that, a faint glow started to emit from the forehead of Acies, who had been sitting next to them, not only that—

“Puh! Mama, where is this?”

“A-Alas=Ramus?”

Faced with an unexpected new “Yesod” fragment, Maou and Emi, who had been surprised multiple times today, felt surprised once again.

Lailah had said before that she had distributed many fragments, but why did she choose Din Dem Urs as one of the recipients.

Just as Maou and Emi tried to imagine the events of sixty years ago when they had no basis to begin their imagining—

“Ooh, this girl is the rumoured daughter of the Hero and Demon King huh. Lailah, you can’t participate in the educating of this child. If she was given to you to raise, she’ll become a useless person after growing up.”

“Lidem! If you don’t stop now, I’m going to get angry, you know?”

“Grandma, who are you?”

Alas=Ramus was surprised by the foreign place, but she did not throw a tantrum and only looked at Din Dem Urs in surprise as she sat on Emi’s lap.

“Hm? Grandma here is someone your grandmother knows.”

“E-Erm, Lidem? I’m not this child’s grandmother...”

“Huh? Are you the type of person who doesn’t want to be called Grandmother? What are you talking about! To the grandchildren, no matter how young the grandmother is, she’s still the grandmother! If you don’t want your grandchildren to be bullied in other places, you have to allow them to call you Grandmother properly! Hm, Alas=Ramus? You can happily watch the ceremony with this grandma, come sit here.”

“Ah, wait!”

Alas=Ramus sat on Din Dem Urs' lap without any hesitation. Maou and Emi would only watch from the side, feeling stunned.

“Look! She’s coming out. Hurry up and cheer for the granddaughter I am so proud of.”

Din Dem Urs ignored both their reactions, and in the direction she pointed at—

“This can’t be.”

The scene of the ceremony, which had been bustling with noise, instantly quietened down.

A name was displayed on the grounds, it was Chiho Sasaki Urs.

Wearing a pure white gi, black chest protector and black hakama, Chiho tied her hair into a ponytail, and quietly but resolutely stood in toriyumi^{|2|} on the stage which was used for the display of archery skills.

She placed the tip of the seven foot three inch (about 210 cm) dark blue bow in a position 10 cm off the ground, in front of the centre of her body, her right hand holding her Haya and Otoya^{|3|} in parallel positions to her bow — this was the most basic bow holding posture.



Matching the pace of her stable breathing, Chiho bowed while facing the arena.

When she was bowing, the tip of the bow did not move at all, maintaining its current height, and when she regained her original posture, Chiho first took one huge step with her left leg, then a smaller second step, and stood in position in the same line as the toes of her right foot. |4|

“Such a beautiful stance.”

Din Dem Urs' comment voiced the thoughts of everyone present.

Maou did not understand the methods of archery, but Chiho's appearance caused his heart, which had been wavering just a moment ago to instantly regain a calmness resembling that of a water surface.

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Rewinding to the events of four days ago.

Recommending Chiho to take part in the Jirga, an event to choose the Enclosure Chief.

In response to Suzuno's proposal, it was not only Lailah, Alberto and Lumark who went to the Northern Continent, as well as Ashiya and Urushihara all naturally showed uncomfortable expressions.

Especially for Ashiya and Urushihara, they did not think that Maou and Emi would agree to this at all, as this proposal was very reckless in the first place.

With regards to this point, Suzuno also agreed with everyone on this.

However, if they were asked if anyone else could participate in the Jirga, or if there were any other methods to peacefully take away the demonic spear, no one could propose an effective counter proposal.

“Of course, I don't plan to force Ms. Chiho to take part. I will

carefully explain in detail everything that has happened and any possible situations which might happen to her in the future. If she feels that she is unable to take up the role, we'll think of other ways. However, I feel that Ms. Chiho is the most suitable candidate for fulfilling Madam Din Dem Urs' conditions."

"However, not letting Lord Demon King and Emilia know is really too much. When they find out about this, they will definitely get really angry."

Those people who knew about Chiho's relationship with those two could understand why Ashiya thought this way.

"That's right, the Demon King and Emilia would definitely strongly protest against this. Especially the Demon King, he did not really want Ms. Chiho to come to Ente Isla in the first place."

"You're correct, so..."

"We shouldn't tell them and proceed directly."

"How did it turn out like that?"

Suzuno avoided Ashiya's sharp tongued response with a cool gaze.

"Even if they were told, the situation would not improve."

"E-Even so..."

"Alsiel, did you forget why the Demon King and Emilia centred their lives around Sasazuka?"

After saying this, Suzuno surveyed everyone who was present.

"Phrasing it more directly, whether it is the Demon King or Emilia, they will not be of much help during the preparatory stages. We would need both their power during that crucial battle, but currently, even if we mobilise those two, there is no work which can be given to them. If we know that they are going to be against it, then what is the point in telling them. I am not bringing Ms. Chiho to Heaven or a dangerous battlefield. I only wish for her to take part in a festival in Ente Isla. What is there to be flustered about? The

people who object against Ms. Chiho being given this important task, what basis do they have?”

“T-This...”

“We have already caused her to experience many life-threatening situations, and we have received a lot from help from her in our daily lives, we have enjoyed these benefits, and we are keeping her out of things at this crucial moment?”

“That’s not how it is right? Putting aside the issue on whether Sasaki Chiho is participating or not, even if the Jirga proceeds smoothly, how are we supposed to snatch back the spear and make the people of the Northern Continent accept it. The current chief cannot order her subordinates to give us the spear, even if someone on our side becomes the chief, the situation won’t change much, right?”

Urushihara was correct, Din Dem Urs had promised to help, but she did not mention how she would help and no conclusion could be drawn from the earlier conversation.

“Depending on the conversation method and way of doing things, there are many ways to resolve this. Even if these things were considered, I will still determine that Ms. Chiho is the most suitable candidate.”

“Huh?”

“...The next issue lies in whether Ms. Chiho would accept this. If Ms. Chiho agrees, we can discuss a more concrete method later.”

“H-Hey.”

“Don’t worry. If Ms. Chiho refuses, you can tell the Demon King and Emilia that all of this was carried out by me alone. Of course, putting aside Ms. Chiho’s wishes, if there are other ways, we can discuss it together... and then, Lailah.”

“Eh? Ah, yeah.”

Lailah, who had been the first one to detect Suzuno's intentions and protest, straightened her posture on reflex when she was called upon.

"Please come with me. If Ms. Chiho agrees, then the key to whether we can recover the demonic spear or not will lie with you."

"...Eh?"

Lailah, feeling confused, could only widen her eyes in surprise.

"Suzuno-san, Lailah-san, why did the both of you come visiting so suddenly?"

A strange pair visited Chiho's house.

Chiho greeted them and invited them into her room, preparing red tea and snacks, but Lailah was acting strangely uncomfortable and Suzuno looked tense as well.

"Oh my, actually a lot of things happened in the other world. Because we had more free time, we were sent here to report the situation to Chiho-dono and request something of you."

"I see. Ashiya-san messaged me, saying that everyone had found a few items from the Ancient Demon King's legacy, that's really great."

The Ancient Demon King Satan probably did not expect that the locations of his legacies which were used to traverse space would be sent to the mobile phone of a high school girl using a message which sounded like "the money dropped yesterday has been found."

"Ah, that would be the Nothung and Ginkan no Mado. Camio from the Demon World seemed to have secured these two pieces and Alsiel will head there shortly to retrieve them. As for the last two pieces of the legacy, the Astral Gem is being searched for and about Adramelechinus' Demonic Spear, we already know its location."

"Yes, I heard it's on the Northern Continent... Lailah-san, are you

alright?”

When Suzuno was talking, large beads of sweat had formed on Lailah’s forehead, and her gaze was flitting between Suzuno and Chiho in an unnatural manner.

“Eh, ah, yeah. erm, it feels a little warm.”

“Is that so? Let me turn down the air-conditioning.”

Chiho nodded and lowered the temperature of the air-conditioning, but Lailah’s outer appearance did not change much at all.

“By the way, that demonic spear was the weapon Demon General Adramelech-san left behind, right?”

This was the first time Suzuno heard someone add -san behind Adramelech’s name, but thinking about it carefully, Chiho had many friends who were Demon Generals.

Suzuno had never seen Adramelech before, but because he stood head and shoulders above the rest of the Ashen Horns, the clan which was proud of their large builds, Suzuno could not help but try to imagine what Adramelech would look like if he came to Japan as a human. However, the problem was that Adramelech was not longer around.

“Yeah. With regards to that spear.”

Even Suzuno’s palms have started to sweat and she leaned forward slightly.

She had said brave words to Ashiya and the others, but Suzuno realised this was the first time she actively wanted Chiho to get involved in the matters of Ente Isla.

Was she crossing a boundary which absolutely should not be crossed?

Can she really ask Chiho to do such a thing?

Was it better to discuss with Emi and Maou after all?

Hesitation and regret engulfed Suzuno's mental state.

"To retrieve that spear, I wish to borrow Chiho-dono's power."

When Suzuno came to her senses, she had already squashed down her hesitation and said this roughly, displaying a personality she had never seen herself showing.

"Eh?"

Chiho did not seem to understand Suzuno's words.

"Some time earlier, I, Lailah, Alberto-dono and General Lumark went to the Northern Continent to observe the situation there. At that time, we were fortunate to speak with the chief of the Northern Continent, Din Dem Urs-dono, and in the end, we were informed that Chiho-dono was the best candidate to retrieve the demonic spear."

"Uh..."

"It does seem like that..."

Chiho, unable to understand the meaning in Suzuno's words, turned to Lailah in reflex, and the latter lowered her head as if she was feeling perplexed and answered in a soft voice which sounded like it might disappear any moment, then gestured towards Suzuno with her palms, instructing Chiho to ask Suzuno about the details of the following events.

"I can help?"

Following Lailah's instructions, Chiho asked this in a dazed manner.

"As for what exactly should be done, we will only know that later. However, along the way, there might be situations where Chiho-dono's archery skills will be required."

"Archery skills?"

When Chiho heard this, she remembered that her bow was still hanging on the bow rack at the school's archery dojo.

“In addition, may I be so bold to enquire if you have any experience in equestrianism?”

“Equestrianism?”

Because it was not a common term, Chiho did not understand it at first, but after thinking about it for a few seconds and understanding that it meant horse riding—

“Erm, I have never ridden a horse, so I’m not too sure...”

—she answered thus.

Lailah thought, *This was to be expected.*

Suddenly being asked if she could help, and the contents were archery and horses.

Obviously, Suzuno would definitely give a detailed explanation about the current situation of Adramelechinus’ Demonic Spear and the conversation with Din Dem Urs later on, but from Chiho’s reaction just now, Lailah did not think Chiho would agree that easily.

That was what she had thought.

Until the next moment.

“Can... Can I really be of help?”

“Chiho-san?”

“I might have said that we wish to ask Chiho-dono for help, but in reality, there is no one other than Chiho-dono who can take on this task.”

Chiho started to blush.

The corners of her mouth relaxed, and she smiled.

This was an expression which appeared only when a person was feeling true happiness.

“Ente Isla is so huge, and there are so many amazing people, and there are definitely many people who are more skilled than me at

the bow and arrow, why was I chosen?”

Suzuno immediately continued to explain.

“The help we wish Chiho-dono to provide is not fighting power, of course. To elaborate further, it is also not the power to win someone else. We wish to borrow your archery skills, but that is not the only thing we need, just like what Chiho-dono said just now, there will be many people whose skills are more polished than yours at the venue. However, we feel that if we wish to recover the demonic spear, we would definitely need Chiho-dono’s power.”

“Suzuno-san...”

“Let me say this first, there will be no danger to your life and we will do our best to provide support, but this task given to you will still cause you to feel a huge amount of pressure and place a burden on your body. If you feel that you cannot do it after listening to the end, please tell us. Even if you reject this, it will not cause any immediate problem, and it’s not like we do not have any alternatives at all. This plan is very reckless, and besides me, everyone else is against it.”

“But!”

Chiho interrupted Suzuno’s strong words,

“Suzuno-san was still willing to nominate me, right.”

“That’s right.”

“Can I ask for the reason?”

“Including this point, I wish to explain the events which have occurred and what might happen later on.”

Suzuno did not answer Chiho’s question and began to explain other matters.

“...A-Alright.”

Chiho’s motivation was a little dampened, but she still sat with a straight posture and listened to Suzuno explain what happened

when they visited Din Dem Urs.

Excluding the embarrassing nickname given by Din Dem Urs and including the conditions which only Chiho could fulfil, Suzuno told everything she had observed happening in Fiensi during the visit to Chiho.

“I understand most of it now.”

Chiho exhaled a huge breath and relaxed slightly.

She finished the red tea which had already turned cold in one gulp to moisten her throat, then sighed lightly.

“Because it feels like a considerable amount of time will be spent, can I make a call first?”

“Of course.”

“Ah, w-wait a moment, Chiho-san?”

“Ah, hello, sorry for calling you suddenly, is it convenient for you to talk now? Alright, I actually have a request, yes, of course I will explain it properly to Kisaki-san later.”

However, before Lailah could stop her, Chiho’s call had already connected.

“...Yes, it’s an important matter which I have to do no matter what. This has something to do with my future path, there is a place I must go to... yes! Thank you! I will definitely repay you when I have a chance! I’m sorry for being this sudden, then this is it for now... fu.”

After Chiho finished the phone conversation quickly, she turned towards Suzuno and Lailah once again.

“Anyway, with this, I will be free after school for one week. What do I need to do?”

Before Suzuno had explained any details about the arrangements

to Chiho, Chiho had changed her working schedule.

And—

“Ah, right. Please don’t worry, I did not call Maou-san or Yusa-san. The other person is the senior at my workplace, a university student whose last name is Ooki.”

“Chiho-san?”

“Maou-san and Yusa-san don’t know about this right?”

“!”

Lailah felt shocked, but Chiho replied before she could ask the reason,

“Because if they knew about this, one of them would definitely come along. After all, they’re spending most of their time in Japan now. Especially Maou-san, once he knows that I would participate in such a thing, he would protest with all his might.”

“I thought so as well. I planned to explain this to you later, but until this progresses to the stage when it is too late to reverse anything, I hope you can keep it a secret from the Demon King and Emilia.”

“I understand!”

“W-Wait a moment, Chiho-san agreed so easily... is it alright?”

“It’s alright!”

There was a smile on her face, but Chiho replied in a determined tone,

“Suzuno-san, thank you. Are you still bothered by that incident from before?”

“It’s not just because of what happened before. Since much earlier on, I felt that he must be taught a lesson. Honestly speaking, no matter how that incident in Nerima turned out in the end, I don’t think he has been reflecting on it at all.”

“Kao always lectures me for being too naïve or too tolerant... thank you. Of course, other than that, I will try my best to complete the task given to me.”

“Yeah, I am counting on you. We will do our best to support you, too.”

“Yes!”

“H-How can this be!? What if they find out later?”

“Would Maou-san get angry? I didn’t do anything to make him angry, right? When Ashiya-san and Urushihara-san are repairing the Demon Fortress, they won’t consult Maou-san on everything. Just like how they are working with the humans of Ente Isla, I am working for 『Demon King-sama』based on my judgement when I feel that there is a need to do so.”

Chiho knew that Lailah was not asking about this, but she still replied this way.

“Only those who are the cream of the crop in mental strength, skill and physical strength amongst the demons can earn the title of Demon General. Therefore, I have to answer the expectations of 『Demon King-sama』and do my best to perform my duty as a Demon General to live up to the name of Mgr on Ald Ballista.”

Not knowing the circumstances of how Chiho became a Demon General, Lailah was shocked speechless.

“I have been protected by everyone this whole time -- this is the first time, *the first time* I am needed by the people of Ente Isla and having an opportunity and help Maou-san. Please, Lailah-san. Let me go to the Northern Continent.”

Chiho bowed to Lailah on the spot.

“...I understand, I get it.”

At this point, Lailah finally caved in.

“Thinking about it carefully, as I was the one who sent Chiho-san

to the battlefield without thinking too much about it, I do not have any right to protest in the first place. I understand. I have to be the channel of communication to Din Dem Urs regardless, then we have to convince Alberto-san and the others, interfere with the Jirga and teach Chiho-san how to use the fragment... isn't this too rushed."

"Then I'll head to school immediately and bring back my bow and arrows. To be ready for what I need to do from tomorrow onwards, I wish to go through some practice and adjustments."

"Yeah, after you are done with that you need to do, I hope you can head to Ente Isla immediately. You have to meet with Din Dem Urs-dono first."

"Wah! I have to speak directly to the most important person in the Northern Continent? I'm so nervous! Then excuse me, please wait for me in my room for a while, I'm heading out now!"

Then Chiho ran out the room like a gust of wind.

"Will it really be alright..."

"There is no need to worry. Other than the Demon King becoming very naggy afterwards, there will be no other issues."

"Isn't that the scariest part of it? And in reality, no matter how reliable Chiho-san looks, she is still a normal high school girl. The Jirga is not a battlefield, but she will enter a political battle."

"It seems like Lailah still does not understand Chiho-dono well enough."

Suzuno stood up and through the window, looked over the street in front of the Sasaki house.

"Connecting the Demon King and Hero, loved by the children of the Sephirah, protected by the Hero and her companions, being appointed as a Demon General, causing many demons to bow at her feet and using spells to cross between different worlds, how is this considered 『a normal high school girl』."

Suzuno watched Chiho's back as she ran towards the school and smiled slightly.

"She's our comrade, the strongest person in this world"

Then that evening, Chiho, accompanied by Suzuno, Lailah and Alberto, smoothly ended her introductory meeting with Din Dem Urs and formally joined the Jirga.

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Following the sound of cutting wind which caused people to think of a whistling arrow, Chiho hit the bullseye with her first arrow.

"It hit!"

Seeing this, Maou could not help but shout this out, and the whole arena were enveloped in a commotion because the standard was vastly different from the previous group when they shot their arrows.

"I don't really understand archery, was Chiho-chan's shot just now really amazing?"

Sitting on the neighbouring seat, Rika asked Alberto this.

Rika had never learned Idea Link, so her Japanese was being translated by Alberto's spell.

"The archery skills from the young lady has overturned everything we know about archery."

Alberto explained, smiling due to his barely covered excitement.

"Just by watching the others, you would realise that the length of the bows of the Northern Continent are only half of the young lady's. Compared to the accuracy of every arrow shot, our archery method is better at shaving down the enemy's strength, meaning that the purpose which be on mobility and constraining movement. There are slight differences between the flat lands and mountainous regions in the North, but all of them are practical in battle. As a

result, they lack elegance in comparison. At this moment, the young lady took out that amazing bow, and showed a unique shooting method.”

In the direction Alberto pointed at, Chiho maintained her shooting position, entering a stage of watchfulness.

On the other side, after leaving the bow, the arrow hit the bullseye beautifully.

A typical target was one foot and two inches in diameter, and Chiho’s first arrow hit the centre of that target which was slightly larger than that.

It was a ceremony, but to be able to conduct a judging after all the contestants in the Jirga have competed against each other in their shooting skills, they could score higher points if they shot closer to the bullseye, employing a simple system of adding up the total points.

Five arrows will be shot each round, and ten points will be awarded for hitting the bullseye.

Hitting further away from the bullseye would reduce the points progressively to eight points, five points, three points and one point, the design of the target and the images on it being very similar to a Kasumi Mato. ⁵

Amongst this, Chiho was the only one who obtained the abnormal results of scoring a perfect score in the first two rounds, with a gap of more than twenty points higher than the second place.

This unique archery style, which could only be described as abnormal by the standards of the Northern Continent, allowed Chiho to cause a big upset, with her odds being abnormally high.

“We would cheer just by seeing the young lady shoot the centre of a target which had been placed so far away, but she’s different.”

When Alberto said this, Chiho switched from a watchful posture to a standby posture of holding her bow, gazed at the archery target,

then quietly returned to the rest area.

“Very serious right? This is what it means by keeping your own counsel.”

Everyone’s gazes were following her back, Chiho sat quietly next to the stage, waiting for her turn, this behaviour stole everyone’s attention.

On the other hand, the man who went after Chiho was a muscular burly man who was twice as big compared to Chiho.

The burly man glared at Chiho, who was sitting quietly, then bunching up his already well-developed muscles such that they grew a few times bigger, he shot his arrow.

This arrow did hit the bullseye, but unlike Chiho’s arrow who hit dead centre, the burly man’s arrow hit slightly below the centre after flying out in a parabolic arc.

“Normally, doing this would be enough to liven up the atmosphere, but now it isn’t enough at all.”

“Oh... Chiho-chan is amazing.”

“The young lady’s shooting method is based off something completely different from ours.”

Ente Isla, who had been very advanced in spells and magic since early on, the development of archery on the battlefield had stopped at a very awkward stage.

Unlike the era between Earth's Ancient and Middle Ages, the long-distance attacks or the first strike in ambushes during war in Ente Isla would always be spells.

The basic strategy of war in Ente Isla would be to cast magic attacks at each other from far away, then have the cavalry or foot soldiers fight each other.

Therefore, when initiating large scale battles, there were only limited opportunities for bows and arrows to be used actively, so

many countries did not prioritise the development of archery skills.

Bows and arrows were seen as a “mid-range battle weapon,” and at the very best, within literature and lore which were not very reliable, there were records of “rain of arrows” being used to describe a battle technique where a huge number of arrows were shot from far away, possibly used by some ancient humans during the dawn of civilization when spells had not yet been developed.

Without considering the crossbows, which were weapons used to attack cities, or archery equipment used primarily for defence, almost all of Ente Isla viewed bows and arrows wielded by humans as an emergency backup weapon for dealing with mid and long range enemies when spells could not be used.

Even so, bows and arrows could have still been used as weapons for sniping or assassination, which may have allowed far range shooting skills to develop further, but the main reason it did not turn out this way was because spell development progressed too quickly.

For important people who might be assassinated, their clothes and equipment were naturally reinforced with spells which will diminish the impact of physical attacks. The spells from the ancient to middle ages were not that exquisite, but in the recent times, rather than large scale destructive spells, everyone prioritised the development of spells which could focus the power, increase the rate of fire, or restrict the enemy’s movements without killing them. Honestly speaking, most of these spells could completely replace the function of a bow and arrow.

It took almost the same amount of time to be well versed in spell-casting or archery, but unlike archery where one could not fight if they did not have high quality equipment or periodically replenished arrows, as long as the concentration of holy magic in the air went over a certain value, humans could use spells immediately.

The Northern Continent's mountainous landscape and harsh weather would frequently cause small conflicts to occur between clans, therefore whether it was hunting in the mountains or the forests, they needed to use guerrilla or stealthy techniques. As a result, it was only here where archery was very developed.

This method which employed stealth had some effect during the battle with the Demon King Army in the recent years, but in the end, the Northern Continent still saw archery as a skill to shoot and kill prey five to ten feet away and did not polish their skills to achieve a longer range. Even for this archery ceremony, the original position for the archery target was only twenty feet away from the stage.

“Twenty feet? It looks further than that.”

Realising that Alberto's explanation did not match her visual estimation, Rika asked this, feeling perplexed.

“That is the amazing part about the young lady. Because she kept hitting the centre of the red dot during the practice run, there wouldn't be any kind of competition, so they added ten more feet.”

However, no one expected that this distance was closer to the distance Chiho was used to.

In Japan's student archery clubs, if it was a close target, then the distance between the shooting position and the archery target would be about twenty feet.

The standards of weights and measures between Japan and Ente Isla were different, so there was some deviation, but with this, Chiho could participate in the competition with the feeling she was used to.

Of course, even if someone could hit a target which was thirty feet away, this did not mean that their chances of hitting the centre of a nearer target would definitely increase.

In an archery competition, there were methods for shooting long

distances and methods for shooting short distances, considering this point, Chiho easily hitting an archery target which was twenty feet away was something very unnatural in the eyes of those experienced in Kyudo.

The archery in the Northern Continent originated from the practical usage in hunting, so the method did not matter as long as the target could be hit, but as a martial art and a rite, Japanese archery was not like that.

“To be able to achieve your goal, this is also one of the reasons why we have to send Chiho, who possesses one of the fragments.”

After saying this, Din Dem Urs pushed up her monocle.

At the same moment, as if sensing this movement, Chiho looked in her direction,

“...That’s right. Calm down. Your nature is more determined than anyone else present.”

Din Dem Urs spoke as if Chiho was standing right there, and despite being at a distance where she could not hear this sentence, Chiho still nodded with force.

Maou and Emi could only watch Chiho’s figure, feeling stunned.

With the current angle, Chiho should have seen that Maou and Emi had come.

Maou and Emi were sitting at the mat covered seats which did not have many people, so even if she could not hear the two of them, she should have seen their silhouettes.

However, Chiho turned back to face forward as if she had not noticed them and closed her eyes to sharpen her focus.

They were unable to match this side profile with the high school girl who would always be at Maou and Emi’s side, showing a smile and warmly accepting them.

“Chi nee-chan is very hard.”

“Eh?”

Alas=Ramus should have been able to see Chiho's current expression.

She was sitting on Din Dem Urs' lap and mumbled this. Maou had thought that she was referring to Chiho's expression, but Acies provided a contradictory explanation.

“Nee-sama meant that Chiho's heart has become very strong, being absent of any fear. Her soul is soft and calm.”

Upon closer examination, since Din Dem Urs monocle had started glowing, both their foreheads had been emitting a soft glow.

Feeling surprised, Maou focused his gaze.

“Hey, Lailah, could it be that Chi-chan...”

“Yeah, that's right.”

Lailah nodded as if she was confirming Maou's guess and showed the small “Yesod” fragment in her palm which was glowing faintly.

“However, this is mostly thanks to Chiho's determined nature and skills acquired from accumulated training. If the foundation had not been established properly, it would be meaningless even if I used the fragment to increase her ability. She really doesn't look like a normal high school girl at all.”

Lailah looked very happy.

During this period of time, the arena's atmosphere filled with excitement because it was Chiho's turn again.

From this angle, Maou stared at Chiho's right hand which was covered in shadows because of her shooting posture.

The moment Chiho shot her second arrow — Otoya, Maou noticed that the around the protective glove Chiho wore to protect her fingers, something glowed.

It was the ring with the “Yesod” embedded in it.

“...Yeah.”

Chiho grasped the zanshin |6| within her body and lowered her bow when she confirmed that the second arrow hit the bullseye.

She wanted to maintain her usual form and hold the Haya and Otoyama while in the toriyumi posture, but she was not participating in a Japanese Kyudo competition, so she still had to shoot three more arrows after this round.

Following her usual training, she shifted out of her shooting posture, and after returning to the rest area—

“That was brilliant, it looks like no one is your match.”

—taking on the support role, Nord smiled to welcome Chiho as he held the already adjusted arrows.

“I was so nervous just now. Emilia-san and Maou-san have come. I feel so nervous shooting in front of them, my hand is shaking.”

“From my point of view, your actions when shooting had not changed at all.”

Nord showed a warm smile and said this to Chiho who still looked at ease.

“If it was me, just standing there would cause me to shake in my boots from nervousness, Chiho-san is able to focus immediately when it’s time for you to go up there. This is not something everyone can do. You can be more confident in yourself.”

“...Yes. Ah, the feathers in that arrow are a little messy, can you help me switch to that one?”

“Understood.”

Following Chiho’s instructions, Nord switched the arrows efficiently and arranged the arrows again.

“...Three more arrows.”

Chiho left the preparation of the arrows to Nord and sat down on the spot to focus her mind.

Nord was providing support behind the stage was because of his own strong desire to do so.

He was not a strong sorcerer or warrior, but amongst the people who knew about the situation, only his appearance was not publicly known, so he would not be suspected of cheating or having a political background.

In addition, he had experienced harrowing events before, so he was very courageous. His hunting experience in the past provided him with knowledge on how to handle arrows. Nord had a mild temperament and looked very reliable with his large stature and beard and in the Jirga where strong warriors gathered, only Chiho, with her petite, thin build and young age, looked vastly different from the rest. Therefore, Nord could also play a role as Chiho's bodyguard.

He had said those words to soothe Chiho's feelings of nervousness, but Chiho did not think that Nord would be cowed by this atmosphere.

Even if the main reason was because his wife, Lailah, was nearby watching him, Nord was also like Chiho, taking part in the Battle to Defeat God and knowing the truth, yet he was unable to help Emi or Lailah at all, and feeling ashamed of his own powerlessness.

Therefore, before the Jirga began, Nord has secretly told Chiho that even if he was only supporting from the shadows, being able to contribute his part in saving the world still made him very happy.

"I'm counting on you, Nord-san."

Within her heart, Chiho thanked Nord.

Chiho was currently taking part in the archery ceremony, but during the day, she still had to participate in other completely different ceremonies and meetings, and only Nord could go with

her.

Nord had stayed in the Western Continent, which had been occupied by Lucifer's army, and because he had explained to Chiho in detail what the country had to do if they wanted the refugees to return to their hometowns, she had been able to barely participate in those abstruse political discussions.

There was still the equestrian segment which could not be resolved even if she had Nord, but if today's archery ceremony could end according to plan, Chiho would not need to participate in the equestrian competition.

"Three more arrows."

Chiho glanced downwards at the ring finger on her right hand, pursed her lips tightly, and looked at the Hoshi Mato^{|7|} located far away from the stage.

"...Grandma, Lailah-san, I'm counting on you."

"Hm?"

The wrinkles in Din Dem Urs' forehead deepened.

"Hey, Demon King boy."

"Hah?"

She actually addressed the great demon who had once conquered the world as "Demon King boy."

Even if it was just comparing their ages, the years Maou lived was also many times more than Din Dem Urs, even if the sudden arrogant words caused him to reply crudely, the person who spoke nonchalantly,

"I heard that you knew that brave and praiseworthy child liked you, but you toyed with her feelings?"

"Who said such a ridiculous thing, was it you?"

“Why am I the first one to be suspected!”

Lailah let out an embarrassing shout, it seemed like this was really a test of how much trust she had accumulated over time.

“Toyed, huh... considering recent events, it might not be considered that wrong.”

“Hey, Emi!”

Because this kind of slanderous injury was simply too much, Demon King Satan planned to protest this seriously, but Din Dem Urs, who said these shocking things, pointed towards the fragment embedded in her monocle with an unusually serious expression.

“She wants to properly show the two of you her ability, so she plans to go up there without depending on this.”

“Eh?”

The one who was surprised at this was not Maou or Emi, but Lailah.

“...Yeah.”

Chiho was appreciative, in a state of zanshin just like before, but a completely different type of commotion was happening in the arena.

This was the first time Chiho hit the area to the right of the bullseye.

It was very close to the centre, but having hit the bullseye every time so far, this was the first time Chiho made a mistake, causing a change in the surrounding atmosphere.

The competitors placed in second and below were full of motivation, thinking that this was a good chance to catch up to Chiho, but Chiho still quietly returned to the rest area.

“I still felt nervous after all, causing an error in my shooting

posture.”

“What was the issue?”

“My face was a little misaligned, which was why the arrow deviated to the right.”

In Kyudo, any problems caused by a bad shooting posture was called “Irregularity,” and because Chiho was worried if her third arrow, the first one she was shooting without relying on the power of the “Yesod” fragment, could fly straight towards the target, she subconsciously tilted her head backwards, causing a deviation in her aim.

Therefore, her posture deviated slightly to the right, causing her arrow to hit the area to the right of the target.

“Alright, then just correct it next time. There is a longer rest time between the third and fourth shoot, so if your muscles are started to feel a bit fatigued, you can take the chance to do some stretches.”

“I see... okay then, let’s do that.”

Chiho did not memorise the timetable, so to relax a little, she stopped focusing and started doing some stretching exercises to ease out the tension in her body.

“...Sorry, it was not just that.”

“Hm? Then what was it?”

Nord, who stood to the side waiting for instructions after receiving the bow and arrows from Chiho, asked this, and Chiho answered after holding out her right hand which did not have the ring on it.

“I want to win with my own power, so I subconsciously became too confident.”

“I see.”

Nord looked a little surprised, he turned in the direction of the target, shook his head, and said,

“But even so, it still ended up really close to the bullseye. Many people can’t even manage to hit near the centre, so there’s nothing to feel down about.”

“...Alright.”

She knew that Nord said this to ease the nervousness she felt, but the nervousness in Chiho’s expression only increased.

Rather than saying that she did not hit the bullseye, considering Chiho’s original skill, hitting that close to the bullseye was already considered a very rare occurrence.

Amongst those of her age, Chiho was average in her stamina and muscular strength, and she did not train up her physical ability or muscular strength to maintain her shooting posture.

The reason there was a difference between the archery skills of high school students and university students, or university students and working adults, other than the maturity of their mind, their level of physical training was also a huge factor.

Training the body provided confidence, and confidence can build up a strong state of mind.

Considering this, Chiho definitely did not have an overwhelming advantage in her skills, stamina and muscle strength.

The external club instructor had told Chiho that she was only especially good in her concentration ability, but no matter how strong her mental state was, it would be completely useless in competitions if it could not bring about good results.

In fact, amongst Chiho’s bad posture habits which could affect the accuracy of the shot arrow, deviation in aiming was considered one of the harder habits to be corrected, and when she participated in major competitions, she had ended up in a crisis a few times because she could not correct this bad habit.

Simply put, no matter how much Lailah praised Chiho, her original level of skill in archery was only at this standard.

Being capable of livening up the atmosphere at the Jirga's archery ceremony today, Chiho believed that 95% of the credit had to go to Lailah, who taught her how to use the "Yesod" fragment.

Various phenomenon could be caused by the "Yesod" fragment when holy magic was injected into it, but Chiho's ring was different from Emi's holy sword, Chiho was unable to cause the fragment to exhibit any effects.

Chiho was able to exhibit superhuman powers and fight with Gabriel and Raguel at the Tokyo Tower because Lailah used spells to control her via the fragment.

However, the archery ceremony this time was done in a competition format, and it was difficult for Lailah to secretly control Chiho without being found out by the inhabitants of the Northern Continent.

This was because once the holy magic Lailah used to control Chiho was detected by someone, Chiho would lose her right to take the position of the leader on the spot and be chased out from the Jirga.

Therefore, Lailah earnestly guided Chiho on how to use the fragment and tried her best to teach her how to draw on the power of the fragment using her own holy magic to assist her in her archery skills.

Even so, Chiho's holy magic capacity was not enough to continuously activate the fragment's power to the end, so they needed Lailah to first activate a fragment nearby, then Chiho will echo that and activate her own fragment.

In other words, Chiho would be unable to deliver that kind of performance without Lailah's help.

Chiho had not learned magic in a systematic manner, and she was not even a human from Ente Isla. Even if she was in Ente Isla now, her holy magic capacity will not change, and her natural recovery ability was not worth mentioning.

According to Nord's explanation, borrowing the fragment's power to increase stamina and skill would cause a huge burden on Chiho's body, and the amount of holy magic she could store and the residual amount she would have left was not considered much at all.

However, according to what was known in Ente Isla, basically all the warriors would have some amount of holy magic stored in their bodies, so using holy magic to assist with shooting the arrows was not considered underhanded or a breach of rules.

If they ingested something unnatural, then even if it had nothing to do with holy magic, it might be considered illegal usage of drugs, so before reaching the "main event" of today, she needed to conserve her holy magic as much as possible.

"...No, that's wrong."

In Chiho's heart, this was only one reason amongst many.

If she just wanted to complete the task which Suzuno gave to her, she would be able to achieve rather good results even if she skipped all the unnecessary protocols in Kyudo and just shot the arrow.

To complete the "concentration" within Kyudo, Chiho had to spend a lot of time in her shooting position, increasing the consumption of holy magic. If she shot the arrow quickly, less holy magic would be consumed.

Even so, no such option existed in Chiho's heart since the beginning.

"Maou-san."

Chiho quietly said the name of her important person.

She wanted to show Maou a side of herself which she had never shown to him.

She wanted him to see her standing in this place with her own power, for the sake of carrying out a request of an important friend.

She wanted him to know that she had the power to help him.

So she did not want to cheat.

“Ms. Chiho seems to be the first one to go up again.”

After a short while, a sound announcing the start of the shooting of the fourth arrow rang, and Chiho picked up the bow just like before.

She did not use the Yesod fragment.

And did not use holy magic.

“...”

Ashibumi, done.

Dori, done.

Torikake, done.

Tenouchi, stable.

Momomi^{|8|}, a little unsure about that, but it felt like it was not deviating too much.

From raising to drawing the bow, it felt as if her right shoulder had been raised too high at first, but in the end, she still stabilised and regained the correct posture.

Then it was concentration.

Chiho recalled the club open house when she first entered high school.

The club senior who was on the stage drawing a white bamboo bow had a very beautiful shooting posture.

The Ente Isla target she saw from the middle of the bowstring was a full moon.^{|9|}

“Ugh!”

When the arrow left the bow, it let out the most melodious sound Chiho had ever heard in her whole not very long experience with Kyudo, flying through the range and piercing into the target.

“...Yeah.”

Chiho, who was in zanshin, saw that the arrow had deviated slightly to the left from the bullseye, but had still hit it.

After Chiho returned to the resting area to prepare for the shooting of the last arrow, she exhaled a deep breath for the first time in tonight's ceremony.

“Beautiful, it looked like it had gone well.”

Nord's praise caused Chiho to relax slightly, and she smiled slightly.

“Actually, I felt like jumping in joy.”

Chiho looked at the faraway target with a satisfied expression.

“This is the first time I have hit the bullseye in the competition using only my own strength.”

“If only that was the last arrow...”

After experiencing the best feeling from the fourth arrow, it might cause carelessness or laxness during the shooting of the last arrow.

Just as Chiho took a deep breath, trying to calm down her feelings of arrogance and anxiousness resulting from this best arrow shot.

The arena went into an uproar and Chiho looked towards the stage to ascertain the situation.

“This...”

Nord, who grasped the situation earlier than Chiho, repeatedly looked between the warrior on the stage and the board recording the scores.

“Chiho-san, this is amazing.”

“Yes?”

Nord, who normally had a more sedate temperament, stroked his beard in a rare display of nervousness, and said excitedly,

“You’ve won!”

“Eh?”

Chiho let out a sound as if her focus until now had instantly dissipated.

“The second placed competitor did not hit the target!”

“Eh?”

At this, even Chiho got a shock.

The second placed competitor, the only one to follow closely behind Chiho in score, was a large man from the Wayrland clan from the southern flatland region. However, his fourth arrow did not even hit the target.

Because the second placed competitor missed the target completely, even if the competitors after him all hit the bullseye and Chiho’s fifth shot missed completely, the competitors below second place would be unable to overtake Chiho in points.

“W-What happened?”

“I don’t know. I don’t know, but hm? That...!”

A broken bowstring drooped in the hands of the man from the Wayrland clan.

The man stood stunned for a moment, but as if he had given up, his shoulders sagged immediately, then he returned to the back of the stage after waving energetically to the arena.

Then he headed straight towards Chiho, stopping in front of her.

“E-Erm...”

“...”

The man looked down at Chiho from a position one head taller than Nord and this pressure caused Chiho to flinch, but—

“Your bow is amazing.”

The man only said this in admiration.

“Losing to such an amazing archer like you, I am satisfied. To catch up to your arrows, I could not help but force myself beyond my limits. This was a mistake I should not have made.”

The man looked towards the snapped bow string with a wry smile and knelt in front of Chiho.

“Granddaughter of the great Chief Urs, I have a request.”

The man was also someone nominated to participate in the Jirga, therefore he would know of Chiho’s background.

“G-Go ahead.”

“Can I touch that bow?”

“Bow?”

Chiho had wanted to say that when she wanted to train in Kyudo in high school, her father had bought her a fibreglass bow with a bamboo core. It was considered a rather advanced model for a student.

“I know that this request might be overstepping my boundaries. Actually asking a warrior, and the granddaughter of Chief Urs to show her trump card, this is really rude and...”

“Please do.”

“But is it really alright?”

The man did not expect Chiho to hand the bow over so easily and his large stature was shaken.

“Please go ahead. Nothing will happen even if you touch it.”

“T-Then please excuse me...”

Perhaps he thought Nord was one of the Urs clan members, too, the man first bowed to him, then took the bow from Chiho’s hands.

“It’s light. And this intricate feeling... it looks like bamboo yet it’s slightly different...”

Even if she said it was fibreglass, the other party would not understand, Chiho did not really understand what fibreglass was either, so she could only repeat the explanation she heard from the employee when her father bought the whole set of Kyudo equipment for her.

“This bow is made from bamboo and a special core material, so for a beginner like me, I would be able to shoot an arrow with stronger propulsion but less recoil.”

Once Chiho said that she wanted to use a bamboo bow in the future, the Kyudo shop her father took her to recommended this bow.

The feel of this bow was very close to bamboo, and not only did it feel gentle on the hands when it was pulled, it could shoot an arrow with strong propulsion.

Despite that, it did not have a large recoil, yet it could shoot the arrow with a strong propulsion which seemed to be stronger than what is written in the specifications, so there was a need to properly train the body.

When a shot was made with a good posture, the sound would be higher in pitch, so it was as if the bow was telling the user how their shooting posture was like, and although a fibreglass or carbon bow would not last as long as a bamboo bow, Chiho planned to treasure it to make it last as long as possible.

“You’re a beginner?”

When Chiho, who hit the bullseye in all her shots except during her third arrow, said she was a beginner, the man was unable to hide his shock.

“Yes, honestly speaking, I learned archery for only two years, the results today could only be attributed to my luck and physical condition being really good.”

“Unbelievable...”

Of course the power of the “Yesod” fragment was involved too, but mentioning it at this time was meaningless.

“However, this has caused all the clans to realise that the Urs clan still has scary young people. Perhaps you might end up being the Enclosure Chief, with your status as Madam Din Dem Urs' successor.”

“That won't happen. My archery skills are desirable, but I cannot ride a horse at all, and I am still far behind everyone else in the other clans in terms of politics and economics...it's just that Grandmother...ah, Din Dem Urs-sama insisted on nominating me as a participant...”

Chiho's true purpose was to retrieve the demonic spear, and she could only appear here by asking a favour from Din Dem Urs. Participating in this Jirga which was considered very important to the people of the Northern Continent through this lie caused Chiho to develop a shred of guilt about it, so she did not think she was suited to be a leader.

“Please don't say that, just preventing the other clans from shooting to the end has caused all the clans to develop a newfound respect for the Urs name. Please send Madam Din Dem Urs my greetings. In addition...”

The man returned the bow and arrows to Chiho with a refreshing smile on his face, patted her once on the shoulder, and said,

“I am looking forward to your showcase at the 『Archery Ceremonial Service』.”

“...Yes, I will try my best.”

The Archery Ceremonial Service was the last ritual, after the stage has been cleared, the winner will showcase their best archery techniques, dedicating it to the clans, nature or the deities of the Northern Continent.

To show gratitude for the land, some people will ride a horse and

shoot towards the target consecutively, quite like Yabusame. |10|

Some people prepared wood, plants, fruits or meat they have gathered and let others throw those things at them, then shooting them down one by one, essentially like flying discs.

Some strong people even shot three arrows at the same time, hitting the center of three targets, a shooting style which made no sense in terms of physics or what purpose it served in a ritual ceremony.

Because of this, as most of the fancy skills have been used before, the organising committee would ask those with stellar results what they planned to do for the ceremonial service, and after discussing with Suzuno, Chiho had informed the organising committee about the shooting method she planned to use in the future.

After the man from the Wayrland clan left, Nord walked up to Chiho.

“Then, next up is the real show.”

“Yes.”

“Because you achieved victory early, the preparation time will be longer. The time for the Archery Ceremonial Service was not brought earlier, so rest well before that.”

Chiho nodded, got up from her kneeling position, and after bowing in the direction of the stage and archery target, she could finally release herself from the tension for the time being.

“Is, is it over?”

Seeing the crowd gather around the stage to take it apart, Maou could not help but ask this in regret—

“To think that you’ve have been complaining constantly just now.”

—but he was immediately on the receiving end of Din Dem Urs' sarcastic comment.

“Uh, erm...”

“Oh my, but I can understand Maou-san’s feelings. This means that Chiho-chan has achieved victory, right?”

From the mat covered seat at the side, Rika was still clapping towards the stage which was being taken apart.

Chiho became a dark horse and won in an overwhelming manner, cheers and screams were heard in waves in front of the betting board in the corner of the audience seats.

“Chiho-chan is so strong! I have never heard about it, but perhaps she also gets good results in her club activities. I have never felt this excited in such a long time. Should I start practicing swimming again?”

Rika, who had not recovered from the excitement, had even started crying, but she immediately observed her surroundings.

“Eh? Emi, where did your mother go?”

“...Ah, eh?”

After hearing Rika say this, Emi, who had been focusing on the stage since the middle of the competition and was still focusing on the arena which was being rearranged for Chiho’s Archery Ceremonial Service, finally realised that Lailah, who had been sitting beside her, had disappeared.

“Yeah. Hey, Libicocco who was at your side also disappeared.”

Maou realised that the large sized Libicocco, who had been seating at the seats with Rika and the others, could not be seen anywhere as well.

“Lailah and the Malebranche Chieftain are making preparations for Chiho’s Archery Ceremonial Service.”

The one who answered this question was Din Dem Urs.

“Lailah and Libicocco? What preparations are they making?”

They knew that the Archery Ceremonial Service was a performance to highlight the glory of being the winner, but what were those three preparing for?

“The two of you are slower minded than I thought. Or is that country called Japan so peaceful that the Demon King and Hero have both turned senile? You guys came here to take that, right?”

Din Dem Urs spoke as if she had reached the limits of her patience and used her chin to gesture at the demonic spear overlooking the arena.

“According to the plan, Chiho will borrow Lailah’s powers to carry out a ceremonial service which had never been done before, the Malebranche will take the chance to attract everyone’s attention, and in the end Mini-scythe will take the opportunity when everyone is distracted by the Malebranche’s tricks to retrieve the demonic spear.”

“C-Can such a thing really be done?”

Maou and Emi could not imagine how Suzuno would be able to retrieve the demonic spear when Chiho was carrying out her performance, and what actions Lailah and Libicocco would take.

“Then again, old lady, I’ve been meaning to ask you this for a while now.”

At this present time, Maou finally asked Din Dem Urs about the term she had mentioned a few times.

“The 『Mini-scythe』you keep mentioning, does it refer to...”

“Giving her the exaggerated nickname of Deathscythe Bell is such a waste, calling her Mini-scythe is enough.”

““Pft!””

They felt that it might have been the case, but after Maou and Emi heard the expected answer, they still could not help but laugh at the same time.

“What are those people in the West thinking, actually giving that young lady a nickname of death god or scythe. Calling her Mini-scythe is good enough!”

Everytime Din Dem Urs said the term Mini-scythe, Maou and Emi’s shoulders would shake while trying to hold in their laughter.

In various ways, laughing out loud would be too discourteous to Suzuno.

But at this moment, Maou decided on something.

It was revenge for being kept in the dark.

“I’ve decided I will call her Mini-scythe for the time being.”

At this moment, the bell announcing the completion for the preparations for the Archery Ceremonial Service rang, and Maou and the others as well as the audience turned towards the arena.

Then, the scene was gripped by another uproar.

There was nothing special placed within their field of sight.

The arena, covered by the shadow of the demonic spear, only had Chiho in the toriyumi position and the archery target used for the Ceremonial Service.

However—

“Hey hey hey, is that really alright?”

Even Maou, unfamiliar with Japanese and Ente Islan archery, could not help but question this.

The distance between Chiho and the target was simply too large.

Maou only roughly estimated it with his eyes, but if the distance between the archer on the stage and the target just now was thirty feet, the current distance was easily three times that.

Everyone present was shocked at seeing Chiho in toriyumi position around one hundred feet away from the target.

It was said that in a scenario where Japanese bows were used in

actual battle, anything more than thirty ken (around 55 feet) would be a realm unreachable by the archer's skill.

In competitive Kyudo, there was a type of format known as *enteki*, and according to the rules, the competitors would have to compete using a target placed at a furthest distance of ninety feet away.

Currently, most of the Kyudo dojos would set their far targets at sixty feet away.

It was said that in the past, during a “Toshiya”^{|11|} ceremony held by the Sanjusangen-do in Japan, there was an arrow which flew about 120 feet. However, it was just the distance it flew, it did not hit the target.

In the modern times, the Sanjusangen-do would recreate the “Toshiya” of the past, organising a huge national archery competition every year, but they would only be shooting normal far targets placed sixty feet away.

In other words, if a bow and arrow were used under normal circumstances, then based on what was known in Japan or Ente Isla, it was impossible to hit a target one hundred feet away.

Before the unease caused by this extremely shocking scene could settle down, the organisers started to announce the name of the winner, the archery skill which would be displayed and the type of shooting method which would be used, causing the commotion to increase in intensity.

Chiho Sasaki Urs, winner of the Jirga archery ceremony, would carry out the ceremonial service to show respect to Adramelech's spear, creating the shape of the spear by piercing one arrow with another.

The organisers announced this.

Piercing an arrow with another arrow referred to the second arrow hitting the end of the first arrow, as long as the first arrow hit the target, the second arrow would also be considered as hitting the

target.

It was rare, but even in the realm of Kyudo at student level, it was not as if it had never happened before.

However, most of the cases where an arrow pierced another happened with a short-distance target, and most of it was because of pure coincidence, there was no way to intentionally cause this, and there was no need to do so as well.

The scenario where the second arrow bounced off after hitting the first arrow would be called “Hazu-uchi.”

When a “Hazu-uchi” has happened, the second arrow would be judged as not having hit the target, and even if “an arrow piercing another arrow” did happen successfully, the first arrow would be so damaged that it could not be used again, so after the initial excitement wore off, it would be followed by a feeling of emptiness.

Just announcing the plan to pierce an arrow with another on a far target one hundred feet away was ridiculous enough—

“Did Chiho-chan prepare three arrows?”

Emi saw Chiho prepare three arrows.

The arrows used in a near target and far target differed in the structure of the arrow head and the diameter of the arrow body, but because the arrows used in a far target were thinner, it would be harder to pierce an arrow with another arrow.

“Chiho said that if she wanted to pay respects to that spear, using two arrows would not be impactful enough.”

Din Dem Urs said happily.

“That girl really wants to be an asset to the two of you. But both of you, who underestimated that girl, did not discover her feelings, and did not notice her power.”

Underestimated her.

This phrase pierced into Maou’s and Emi’s chest.

Somewhere within both their hearts, was it true that they saw Chiho as an existence which must absolutely be protected because she did not have any ability to battle?

Somewhere within both their hearts, did they truly not decide on their own that Chiho would not play an important role in the Battle to Defeat God?

Chiho would always announce that she wanted to be Maou's and Emi's strength, but did they just treat her determination as a type of wish and distanced her because of that.

"If the two of you truly wish to fight the gods, then her next arrow would be a resounding arrow opening up the curtains to Ente Isla's next one hundred years."

After gracefully bowing to the whole arena, Chiho picked up an arrow with her right hand, raised her bow and took one step forward.

There was no hesitation in Chiho's eyes, her figure after raising the bow, nocking the arrow and pulling the bowstring back resembled a drawing on a folding screen.

"Chi nee-chan! Do your best!"

"Show them! Chiho!"

"Her fire in her eyes is good. That's the gaze of a warrior."

The fragments from Alas=Ramus, Acies and Din Dem Urs began to glow, and as if it was answering to the cheers, Chiho's right hand also emitted a purple glow.

"...Ugh!"

Accompanied by a clear high-pitched sound, the arrow left the confines of the bow, and in the next instant, beautifully pierced into the center of the target.

Roaring cheers spread across the arena.

The arrow hit the bullseye of a far target one hundred feet away.

Just this feat was unbelievable enough, but Chiho picked up a second arrow immediately.

Once Chiho pulled back the bowstring, the arena was gripped by a tense atmosphere, Alas=Ramus and Acies stared at Chiho, holding their breath.

Maou was so nervous that he could hear his own heartbeat.

“Ugh!”

With a high-pitched sound, the arrow left the bow once again.

The sound which reached their ears was different from the sound heard when the target was hit, it was slightly duller.

“.....Amazing.”

“Chiho-chan is really amazing.....”

Maou and Emi could not help but mumble.

Chiho perfectly pierced an arrow with another.

The power of the second arrow caused most of the first arrow to sink into the target, making it look as if only one arrow had been shot since the start.

Cheers could no longer be heard.

Chiho prepared the third arrow.

Everyone was quietly waiting for the never seen before “linking of three arrows on an extremely far target.”

Chiho picked up the last arrow, assumed the toriyumi posture and took one step forward.

When everyone’s sights were focused on Chiho—

“!”

—Maou’s and Chiho’s eyes met.

Chiho, who should have held up her bow with her back facing this direction, definitely turned her head slightly to look at Maou.

Even with a shoulder separating them, those pair of eyes with their profound depths attracting Maou deeply, to the point where he had even forgotten to breathe.

Maou felt that she had smiled.

However, in the next instant, Chiho was looking straight at the target, and Maou started to question if Chiho really looked in his direction in the first place.

Chiho felt that the holy magic in her body was infinitely surging upwards.

Once she shot this arrow, her job was done.

She originally stayed here to trick all the participants in the Northern Continent's Jirga.

Whether it was Suzuno willing to rely on her, or the fact that she could be useful to Maou, it all made Chiho happy. Suzuno and the others came up with a plan to retrieve the demonic spear, and Chiho was standing here as one of the members.

However, all these miscellaneous thoughts have all been erased, Chiho's sights were focused on the small bullseye which she could barely see from the left side of the bowstring, and the area beyond it.

"Demon General, Adramelech."

Chiho called out the name of the Demon General who had been Maou's enemy in the past, then Maou's good friend who trained and fought with Maou, and now, had no chance to ever meet.

"Once again, please wield the demonic spear inherited from the great ancestors of the Ashen Horn clan, for the sake of Demon King Satan."

Chiho activated all the holy magic in her body and the bow in her hand glowed silver at the same time.

“This is...?”

Maou had seen that glow before.

That was the glow Chiho had shown at the Tokyo Tower.

At that time, because she was being controlled by Lailah in the background and because of the “Yesod” fragment, Chiho plundered the demonic magic from the surroundings, causing the demonic magic barrier to dissipate into the air, as if the magic was being purified.

However, there was no such demonic magic right now, so even if she repeated the actions from before, it was impossible to produce such results.

Maou could only think that Chiho planned to increase her power to her limits, and in reality, it was not just Chiho herself, Suzuno, Lailah, Din Dem Urs, Libicocco and Alberto, the ones involved in this plan, could only expect her to do this much.

However—

Even after it was over, no one could explain the phenomenon which occurred at that time.

Thin thorn-like ice pillars began to appear at Chiho’s feet.

The ice pillars began to surround Chiho, as if they were protecting her, and eventually, they merged with the bow which was emitting a silver glow.

“That is...”

This time, Maou truly stopped breathing.

This was impossible.

He thought that he would never see that magic again.

This unexpected situation caused Alberto and Din Dem Urs to lean forward on reflex, but Chiho’s expression did not change at all, and continued to focus on the target.

“Thank you, Adramelech-san.”

Then the arrow left the bowstring.

The arrow, glowing with silver light, drew a diamond dust trajectory under the light of the sun, and pierced the tail of the arrow in front of it with a sound so beautiful that it seemed to be capable of causing a stir in the world.

At the same time, ice crystals erupted from the ground, large enough to swallow up the three arrows which were connected to each other.

The ice blew away the diamond dust and rushed up into the skies, finally encasing the three arrows in ice, evolving into the exact same shape as the demonic spear.

“...”

The arena was no longer able to maintain its bustle, and they could only look at each of the demonic spears in turn, with the young girl standing in the middle.

Chiho, no longer with any glow or ice surrounding her, put down her bow nonchalantly, and bowed to the ice spear with the three arrows sealed inside.

At this moment.

“W-What is that!?”

Someone’s scream caused everyone to look in the direction of the voice.

“What!”

“That is...”

Maou and Emi also looked in that direction and shouted out in surprise at the same time.

Chiho was the last person to look towards that place.

The real demonic spear which had been there all along.

Next to the spear appeared a figure of the Demon General who once conquered the Northern Continent and was both revered and feared by many.

“Adramelech...”

As if it was being transmitted outwards with Maou’s mumble, Adramelech’s name spread through the whole arena like a ripple.

The figure of the great clan leader Adramelech, once honoured as a reincarnation of the divine ancestors of the Ashen Horn clan, was focused, staring in a certain direction.

When the initial uproar quietened down, people started to trace his line of sight, and noticed the petite girl who displayed this miraculous ceremonial service.

“You helped me just now, right.”

Chiho said this with a smile to the huge blue bull-head demon who was many times larger than her.

“Thank you.”

She shifted back to her bow holding posture and bowed to her senior in the Demon King Army.

Seeing this, Adramelech seemed to smile in response.

“Huhh?”

Then Adramelech’s figure melted into the void, vanishing into thin air.

At the same time, the demonic spear was enveloped by a blue light which had descended from the sky, the blue light soon turned into a pillar of light, and within that unsteady space, the demonic spear warped as if it was melting gradually.

Chiho straightened, and slowly watched this scene.

The blue pillar of light disappeared after a dazzling flash of light and Adramelech and the demonic spear disappeared, leaving only

the sight of the usual blue skies of Fiensi in front of them.

At the arena, what was left were the stunned citizens of the Northern Continent, the new ice demonic spear which had the miraculous offering sealed within it.

And the young girl who caused this miracle.

※

Central Continent, the ruins of the old Isla Kentorum, the Demon Fortress.

Within the six-tatami space which had been temporarily moved into the throne room, Maou, Ashiya and Urushihara were sitting at the kotatsu eating lunch.

“Seriously, if both of you knew about it, why didn’t you tell me.”

“That’s because you would definitely be against it. Does it matter, everything went well in the end.”

“My deepest apologies, when I knew about the details, Bell and Din Dem Urs have already arranged everything, there was no time to stop it...”

“Everything might have ended well.”

Maou put down his rice bowl, and at the same time he swallowed the rice in his mouth, he looked at a certain object which had been placed against the wall of the throne room.

That was the Adramelechinus’ Demonic Spear which had disappeared into the blue pillar of light.

“Do you know how many years were shaved off my life due to the fright I received at Fiensi?”

“Is that a problem? Didn’t you see something good? After all, that rude old lady was honestly giving praises and Bell, Lailah and Alberto Ende were constantly saying good things about it.”

“The reason is that I knew nothing from the beginning!”

“You’re really noisy nagging like that, you know! Where did your straightforward nature go? Whenever it’s related to Sasaki Chiho, you become unreasonable. Do you have any alternative plan, then?”

“Shut up!”

“Demon King-sama, rice is flying out of your mouth, please calm down.”

“Annoying, this is irritating! What is this!”

Maou seemed to have descended into a self-defeatist attitude.

For the first time in the history of the Northern Continent’s Jirga, after the demonic spear disappeared, the event was immediately suspended without completing all the scheduled programmes.

Adramelech’s illusion had appeared.

And the incident of the disappearing demonic spear.

The reason behind the appearance of the new ice demonic spear had been viewed as an extraordinary strange phenomenon, and Din Dem Urs, using her authority as the Enclosure Chief, called for an emergency motion to open an investigation. All the clans had supported her view.

Of course, Din Dem Urs knew about the appearance of Adramelech’s illusion and the disappearance of the demonic spear since the beginning, but no one expected Chiho’s ice arrow or the ice demonic spear.

According to the original plan, Chiho would probably use Lailah and the power of the “Yesod” fragment to obtain never seen before excellent results at the archery ceremony, and when showing off her skills during the Archery Ceremonial Service, Libicocco would use the Malebranche’s skills of necromancy and illusion magic to create an illusion of Adramelech. As for Suzuno, when everyone’s attention was focused on this magic, without the sorcerers of the Northern Continent detecting any magic, she would use the Angel Feather Pen to open a “Gate” to transfer the demonic spear to

another place, acting out a manufactured miracle.

However, a miracle not accounted in anyone's plans had really happened.

The ice thorns which helped Chiho shoot her third arrow was definitely the demonic ice magic Adramelech was skilled with.

The ice demonic spear created by Chiho's third arrow was still standing at the same spot, without showing any signs of melting.

The results of the initial investigation concluded that the ice spear did not contain any demonic magic, and Din Dem Urs passed this result to Saint Aire's Sorcery Management Institute via Lumark. But the reason it did not melt was still a mystery.

"The only explanation we could think of was the holy magic mutation mentioned by Landlady-san and Lailah. In other words, the demonic magic Adramelech left in Fiensi and the power of the fragment from Sasaki-san's "Yesod" caused some kind of abnormal reaction."

When Lailah interfered with the battle at Tokyo Tower by using Chiho, she had used the arrow shot by Chiho to dispel the demonic magic which Maou and the others have gathered.

In addition, Adramelech had erected demonic magic antennas known as Ice Tree Towers in the Northern Continent. Therefore, it might be some reaction due to Chiho's power interacting with the Adramelech's demonic magic left in the underground water channels.

Even so, they did not know the theory behind that "some reaction" or anything related to that ice demonic spear, so everything was still shrouded in mystery in the end.

"Honestly speaking, it feels that anything afterwards can just be pushed to the Northern Continent to handle on their own. In the end, that ice spear saved Lumark and Emerada a lot of trouble, right."

The miracle which had occurred at the Jirga, the top grand event of the Northern Continent, spread around the world even faster than the rumours of Hero Emilia and Demon General Alsiel appearing at the civil war in the Eastern Continent.

Therefore, the results of the investigation of the Saint Ignord's groundwater which was carried out by the Sorcery Management Institute with Alberto's approval might help in solving the mystery of the mysterious pillar that rose up from Fiensi's land. Acting like they did not know anything, Lumark and Emerada used this as an excuse to make contact with Din Dem Urs via diplomatic channels to investigate this chain of incidents.

Currently, no one had suspected that the demonic spear was stolen.

The demonic spear, following its master, returned to the sky (more accurately, it went back to the demon world), or when Adramelech came back from the other world to take back what he had forgotten, he discovered that it had already been claimed by the Northern Continent, so through Chiho Sasaki Urs, he left a replacement spear behind, this kind of completely unscientific supernatural explanation was already being spread through the streets by people who thought it was interesting.

Either way, whether it was the end result or the reactions afterwards, the retrieval of Adramelechinus' Demonic Spear, which had been thought to be the most difficult task to complete, was a resounding success in the end.

After the Archery Ceremonial Service ended, Maou and Emi met up with Chiho at the arena and because the two of them momentarily did not know what to say to Chiho, they fell silent for a short while.

Chiho, who handed her bow and arrows to Nord for safekeeping, hid her hands within the slits of her hakama as if she was sticking

her hands into pockets, and constantly moved her hakama from side to side.

“Hey, hurry up and say something!”

Rika was the first one to break the silence.

Maou, whose back was pushed forcefully from behind, took one small step closer to Chiho.

Then Chiho blushed, and with a gaze of the child who was preparing to be scolded, she looked up and Maou.

“Erm, Maou-san, I...”

“Uh, yeah, what is it.”

For some reason, Maou could not accept that gaze directly and he almost wanted to turn his head away.

But at the last minute, he pushed down the urge to do so.

If he looked away at this moment, he would never be able to face Chiho directly.

He believed this.

“Sasaki Chiho!”

“Y-Yes!”

With Maou suddenly calling her by her full name, Chiho straightened her back.

“You did very well. It was great.”

“...Maou-san.”

“Adramelech must feel very happy.”

After saying this, Maou looked towards the ice demonic spear.

That definitely had the right to serve as a symbol of the Demon General who used the power of demonic ice to support his goal for conquest.

Chiho nodded in agreement, and after breathing in with some

force, she stared at Maou determinedly—

“Demon King-sama.”

—and said this to Maou for the first time.

“Demon General Sasaki Chiho has successfully completed her mission!”

“...Good job.”

This was the limit.

“Fuahhhhhh!”

Chiho exhaled with force and slumped to the ground.

“S-So nervous. I was so nervousss!”

“A-Are you alright?”

Maou could not help but reach out to Chiho who was going to kneel on the ground.

This kind of position made it look like he was hugging Chiho from the front, causing both their gazes to meet at an extremely close distance.

Maou instantly panicked and Chiho blushed slightly, but still showed a happy smile.

“...Heheh. But, I recovered slightly just now.”

“What... ah, o-oh...”

“Sorry for doing such dangerous things without telling the two of you.”

“No, erm, it wasn’t that dangerous, and we saw something great, should it be called amazing, Chi-chan’s skill with the bow, erm, is really great.”

Maou was unable to express it smoothly, but Chiho still felt very happy.

“I received help from many people. So my own power alone is

really not much.”

“No, it’s not like that at all. Lailah said it was because your foundation was good...”

“But it was fortunate that I could show it to you. It made my efforts worthwhile.”

“O-Oh...”

Watching a happy Chiho and clumsy Maou—

“If you want to praise someone, do it properly.”

—As if she could not take it anymore, Emi commented this while standing behind Maou.

“E-Emi.”

“Yusa-san...”

“Chiho-chan would always give us a huge shock huh. But your actions this time is seriously bad for the heart...I hope that in the future, you can let us know beforehand.”

“Alright. I won’t do such things behind your backs anymore.”

Chiho nodded happily and got up with Maou’s help.

“I asked Akiko-san to change shifts with me, thanks to the Jirga, I feel like I have a sight idea of the direction to take in the future, Maou-san...”

In response to Chiho’s confession which was filled with determination—

“I don’t mind taking a longer path. I already know that no matter how long I take, I only have one goal. So... no matter where you go, I will catch up to you.”

“R-Right.”

—Maou could only reply in a clumsy manner.

“That day was really bad for the heart... in many ways...”

“Why are you still talking about this.”

The one who reacted to Maou’s endless complaints was not Urushihara.

“Ughpu... Suzu, Suzuki-san?”

Ashiya reacted more strongly than Maou.

“Hi, everyone.”

As if she had just left work, Rika was wearing clothes for going out, hugging a paper bag in her arms.

The throne room was very far away from the ground, so she could not have walked upstairs on her own.

She probably used the Angel Feather Pen from her home in Japan to open a “Gate” to come here.

“You seem to be using the 『Gate』 however you want now.”

Maou said with a half-troubled smile, and Rika replied directly,

“It’s the same as riding on the Shinkansen or a plane. When you take it alone for the first time, you’ll feel uneasy even when buying the ticket, but once you’re used to it, you’ll feel that there’s nothing to be afraid about.”

Maou, Ashiya and Urushihara had never rode the Shinkansen or a plane, so they could not comprehend this comparison, but that knew that simply put, Rika was already used to travelling between worlds.

“By the way, it’s a little late, but these are for you.”

“Hm?”

Rika took off her shoes and walked onto the tatami, then pulled out three beautifully wrapped boxes, placing them in front of the three guys.

Amongst those three boxes, only the box in front of Ashiya was

twice as big compared to the other two and was very elaborately wrapped.

“What is this?”

“Maou-san, how can you ask this kind of question. Of course it’s Valentine’s Day chocolate. The 14th had already passed, but it should still be within the allowed date range.

Once Rika said this, Maou looked towards the Japanese calendar which was placed on top of the storage drawer in the corner of the tatami.

It was two days after Valentine’s Day but considering that he had received chocolate from Kusuda on 7th February, it was indeed within the allowed date range.

“Why is Ashiya’s one the only one which is especially huge.”

It was unclear if Urushihara was reading the atmosphere or not, but he asked this question directly.

“That obviously because the ones for Maou-san and Urushihara-san are obligatory chocolates. Ashiya-san’s one is sincere chocolate.” |12|

“...Ugh?”

Ashiya somewhat expected this, but this sentence still left him shaken.

“Suzu, Suzuki-san, but...”

“Ah, there’s no need to go out of your way to give me a return gift next month. All of you should be quite busy from now on, so you can return me a gift when you feel like it.”

“E-Erm, that’s not what I meant.”

Ashiya had clearly rejected Rika’s confession before.

At least he felt that he had rejected her properly.

Therefore, during this one month, he did not meet Rika at all, and

in reality, he did not have much opportunities to meet her.

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“Uh, erm...”

“It’s really unclear.”

Rika smiled after sensing Ashiya’s wavering attitude.

“Oh my~ I carefully thought about it afterwards and discovered that I was never actually dumped.”

“Eh? That is...”

“In the end, Alsiel-san did not give me a clear answer, just like a certain person.”

“...”

That “certain person” turned away with an unhappy expression.

“Sigh, you should just say it directly if you really dislike me. However, before that, I’m going to attack while harbouring the same level of determination as Chiho-chan. Ah, oh yeah, is Chiho-chan still below?”

“Eh? Ah, y-yes.”

“I see, then I’m going to say hi to her.”

After saying this, Rika naturally took out the Angel Feather Pen from the pocket of her jacket, stuck it into the ground and jumped into the “Gate” which opened.

She probably headed to the ground via that “Gate.”

After shrugging at how casually Rika was opening Gates, Maou turned back to the dinner table on reflex and ended up facing Urushihara’s annoyed gaze.

“Seriously, both of you.”

“Hm?”

“Being run around in circles by human females like this, aren’t

you questioning the way you're living as demons?"

Being lectured by Urushihara on their way of life would mean the end, but for once, Maou and Ashiya could not retort at all.

"T-Then, I should go wash the dishes."

"M-Me too..."

"Seriously..."

Just as Maou and Ashiya planned to stand up to escape Urushihara's admonishing gaze.

"Lord Demon King, Lord Eastern General, Lord Lucifer, excuse us."

Farfarello, Libicocco and Ciriatto arrived at the entrance to the throne room together.

"Hm? What is it?"

The three of them were obviously in their Malebranche forms when they were here. There were each holding what looked like boxes in their deformed palms.

"Lord Demon King, Lords."

The three Chieftains stood in front of the tatami and placed the boxes in their hands to Maou, Ashiya and Urushihara respectively.

Intrigued, Maou, Ashiya and Urushihara looked at the boxes, and after noticing that there were pink heart stickers stuck on the boxes, though the three of them were expressionless, question marks floated above their heads.

Libicocco was the first one to make things difficult.

"Lord Demon King, we heard that in Japan, there is a practice of giving food to someone you revere to convey one's feelings."

"...Huh?"

Urushihara was the first one to frown.

“Us Malebranches have disrupted the peace of the Demon World, causing trouble for Lord Demon King, the both esteemed Generals and Minister Camio, but everyone was willing to forgive us, causing us to develop deep feelings of admiration.”

“...Hm?”

Ashiya felt confused because he did not know why Ciriatto was saying these things.

“Therefore, to reaffirm our feelings of gratitude and loyalty towards all of you, please accept this.”

“...Could it be?”

Maou, who spent a long time not knowing what expression to show—

“Can I open it?”

—opened the box carefully after saying this.

As for the all important contents.

The first smell which wafted out was that of sweet cocoa, then what filled Maou’s field of vision was, though a little malformed, heart shaped chocolates filled with feelings.

“Eh?”

“T-This is...”

Urushihara and Ashiya, looking in from the side, stared at the chocolate as if they were not sure what was happening in front of their eyes.

“H-Hey, Farfarello.”

“Yes.”

Maou did his best to force a smile on his stiff face and asked,

“Did all of you... make this by hand?”

“Forgive us for our insolence, but it was because we heard that if

it was handmade, the feelings would be expressed more strongly.”

“...Uh... then you have my thanks.”

Maou did not know how to express the feelings which were welling up within his heart, and he could only survey this surroundings nervously, looking at the Valentine’s Day chocolate package which Rika left behind earlier in the end.

Just as he started thinking how these Malebranches, who were so scary in appearance that they could make a child stop crying, used their deformed hands to make heart shaped chocolates—

“Demon King, are you around?”

A familiar voice was heard together with a huge number of footsteps, flooding into the throne room.

“Tsk.”

“D-Don’t tell me.”

Suzuno led a huge group of demons inside.

Other than the familiar faces from the Ashen Horns, Iron Scorpions and Malebranches, even the goblins, Pahalo Denino clan members and the demons who had survived the cleansing operation conducted by the people in the Central Continent had come. More than fifty demons stood nervously in a line, and all of them were holding holding small boxes which did not match their large builds, just like those brought by Farfarello and the others.

“Ugh, you three.”

When Suzuno noticed that the three chieftains had arrive first, she frowned and chided them.

“Didn’t we agree that everyone will give the chocolates together?”

“Hah, it’s because our hands are nimbler than the rest of you. Because we finished them earlier, so we’re giving them earlier, what’s wrong with that.”

However, Libicocco only replied thus with a shrug, and did not look remorseful at all.

“My apologies, it’s because this guy insisted on coming first.”

On the other hand, Farfarello apologized to Suzuno in a rather embarrassed manner.

“H-Hey, Bell, this is...”

Ashiya looked at the demons in front of him and asked this with wide eyes.

“Isn’t it obvious, it’s obligatory chocolate, of course.”

Suzuno replied nonchalantly.

“Seriously, everyone agreed to give the three of you a surprise together, but some secretly ran off first.”

“Uh... this has already exceeded the level of a surprise...”

Could it be that there was handmade chocolate in all the boxes held by all these demons who were standing in a line?

Suzuno, who sensed the question in Maou’s mind through his expression, nodded.

“Everyone worked hard.”

“Don’t mess with me! What did you make them do!”

“What is it? Are you actually unwilling to accept these chocolates, filled with loyalty and love from your cute subordinates, who did this to thank you for your care?”

“I, I didn’t say such a thing... e-erm, I do feel grateful about it...”

“Good. Then, everyone line up properly. Lord Demon King and the Generals seem to be happy to accept your feelings.”

“What?”

“Uh, erm.”

“Eh, wait...”

With Suzuno's orders, Maou, surrounded by all the demons who wanted to give him chocolate, started to scream, Suzuno showed a satisfied smile—

“Oh my, seeing my master so well loved, I feel so happy about it.”

And said this shamelessly.

“W-What happened? What's going on?”

“I, I don't know either.”

“This is bad, if we leave this alone, it would be bad for the Demon King Army...”

The demons' handmade chocolate piled up higher and higher.

Every box looked filled to the brim, and after picking one up to look at it, the weight was actually quite significant.

After the demons left, a large number of boxes were left behind, giving the impression that someone was moving house, some boxes even rolled off the tatami onto the floor.

As if they could not comprehend the events which had just transpired in front of them, Maou, Ashiya and Urushihara stood there for a long while, stunned.

“Don't worry, there are three flavours, slightly bitter, milk and red tea, so you will not get sick of eating them that easily.”

“No, with this amount, we'll definitely get sick of eating... hm?”

Before he could finish his weak retort, Urushihara noticed a box packaged with light green paper and golden string on top of the small mountain of obligatory chocolate.

“Then this is erm... matcha and wasanbon flavour. Anyway, that is it, the feelings I have are not as strong as the loyal subjects of the Demon King Army, but please accept this.”

“...Huh?”

“I kept you in the dark this time, so how should I say this, this is to

express my apologies.”

Suzuno said this, but unlike how she was encouraging the demons just now, she did not look as relaxed as before.

“...Thanks a lot then. Oh... wasanbon is a premium sugar in Japan, right?”

Maou examined the box containing Suzuno’s chocolate in detail—

“With regards to the spear, it’s been hard on you this time. You did well and was a big help.”

Then looked at the demonic spear placed at the corner of the throne room.

“I will find an opportunity to return you that favour. Oh yeah, now that I think about it, should I be preparing the return gifts for next month?”

The term “return gifts” caused Ashiya to turn pale. Suzuno blinked in surprise, but she smiled happily immediately after that.

“I was just carrying out my duties as a Demon General of the Demon King Army, but since you said it, then please give me a little reward ...”

“Ah— Suzuno-san!”

A surprised shout transmitted into the throne room and shook the air inside, causing Maou, Suzuno and the others to flinch in fright.

“Didn’t we agree that everyone is going to give the chocolate together?”

“Chiho-chan, this can’t be helped. If you came with so many demons, you might get squashed.”

“Papa! Chocolate! Chocolate!”

As expected, Chiho, Emi and Alas=Ramus entered holding boxes.

After Chiho ran over, just like what Rika had done earlier, she passed the three of them one cutely packaged box each.

Just judging from the size, Urushihara's box was unexpectedly the biggest, then Ashiya, with the last one being Maou's.

"Urushihara-san's is a snack gift box, Ashiya-san's one is a side dish gift box."

Hearing that the contents comprised of salty foods caused Urushihara and Ashiya to breathe a sigh of relief, but with this they were only ingesting large amounts of sugar and salt and the same time, so it was not as if it was healthier like this.

"As for Maou-san, you get handmade sincere chocolate, of course!"

As for the all important Maou, it was chocolate concentrated with her sweet feelings.

"T-Thanks. Did you make this yourself, Chi-chan?"

Because the packaging was different from the store sold products, Maou asked this.

"Yes, actually I made it together with the demons."

""""Eh?""""

Chiho's shocking confession caused the three demons to yell out in surprise at the same time.

"Chiho-chan brought ingredients from the other side to make them here, one of the demons saw this and asked for the reason out of curiosity, and it ended up being that situation you saw just now."

"Are you serious ..."

Would the Valentine's Day custom spread amongst the demons in the Demon World just because of an idea from a high school student?

Even if it does spread, the ingredient chocolate could only be found in Japan, so if the demons began to inject their own creativity into the food in the Demon World or Ente Isla, what kind of situation would it cause?

Then again, it was surprising that the demons, who did not have a habit of eating in the first place, could understand the concept of giving chocolate during Valentine's Day.

“Are those guys changing too?”

“What are you mumbling. Take it.”

“.....Eh?”

This time, Maou really did not know what was being passed to him and showed a confused expression.

Emi seemed to predict that Maou would react that way.

“This isn't from me. Alas=Ramus made this.”

“Ugh!”

Maou reacted quickly to this sentence and snatched the box from Emi's hands.

“T-This is made by Alas=Ramus?”

“I helped!”

“Alas=Ramus-chan is very good in pouring the chocolate into the heart shaped molds.”

Maou could not hold back a smile at Chiho's explanation.

“I, I see... I seeee! Papa is so happyyy! You've already grown to the point you can complete such thingggs! Thank you, Alas=Ramus! I'll definitely give you a proper return gift.”

“Oh? Oh.”

Alas=Ramus did not seem to understand what Valentine's Day really was, but perhaps Emi did dress her up a little, just having her head, with her hair now tied into two ponytails, patted by Maou, was enough for her to show a satisfied smile.

“Ah, everyone is just about done giving the chocolate? Maou, this is from me. You just need to give me a return gift at twice the value on White Day.”

At this moment, Acies walked in, eating the chocolate which was meant to be given to Maou. As Maou patted Alas=Ramus' head, he smiled and—

“Get out of here!”

—shooed Acies from the throne room.

“Chiho-dono, is it really alright doing it like this?”

“I think this is the best way of doing it. With this, it won't put any pressure on him, right?”

“Not considering if it would cause a mental burden, it would probably cause a huge burden on his teeth and weight.”

Suzuno, Chiho and Emi were eating lunch at the foot of the mountain where the Demon Fortress was located while watching the demons happily divide the remaining chocolate amongst themselves.

The demons seemed to understand the deliciousness of chocolate, causing the others to suspect if they really did not eat during the course of their lives so far.

“Right now, this is enough.”

Chiho leisurely watched the scene in front of her and repeated her answer.

Emerada, Acies, Iron and the demons were starting a fight over the remaining chocolate, Rika and Lumark were sitting at the side, eating pancakes which were souvenirs in Japan, looking further ahead, Lailah and Nord could be seen exchanging chocolate in an intimate manner, and Gabriel who had been watching the two of them from his hammock, had entered the realm of dreams at some point in time.

Emi watched this scene from behind, lowered her head slightly and mumbled,

“Right now, this is enough?”

“Yusa-san?”

“...No, it’s nothing.”

Right now, this was enough.

This was the natural state of things.

A natural scenery which had been completely unimaginable a few years ago.

“Right now, this should be enough.”

That night.

Within the six tatami space in the Demon Fortress throne room which did not have any people, most of the chocolate given by the demons had been stacked on the kotatsu like a huge brick wall.

Whether it was eating them or taking back to Sasazuka, the quantity was so large that they could not be settled immediately, so Ashiya probably arranged the mountain of chocolate into its current state.

The packaging of Rika’s, Suzuno’s and Chiho’s chocolate was different from the ones given by the demons, so they had been placed at the side. It looked like it was impossible to eat them today in the end.

“...”

The boxes of chocolate given by the demons had been stacked into a small hill, someone lightly placed a box on top.



Packaged using a cardboard box which came in ten pieces a pack and the heart shaped stickers which Chiho brought, it was a simple box of chocolate.

“It’s not like I want to make you happy.”

The only ones to hear this was the mountain of chocolate.

“I just feel that if this is obligatory chocolate, then it’s not like it can’t be done, at least with how it is currently.”

The excuse with no clear recipient dissipated into the throne room, and a short while later, the presence of the visitor who put the last box down disappeared into the sleeping night streets.

FINAL CHAPTER

“Fwahhhhh! I’m so tiiiiired!”

After throwing her large boston bag onto the bed, having let all of her guard down, Chiho collapsed onto the bed in her room.

Travelling between worlds five days in a row was tiring after all.

Unfortunately, her mother had been at home those five days and did not have any plans to go out. This meant she had a hard time planning her schedule, since she had to first stay at home long enough to be free of any suspicion, and then later lots of things happened at the Jirga.

But everything paid off in the end: she successfully gave chocolate to Maou, and the Adramelechinus' Demonic Spear was smoothly returned to the Demon King Army.

In addition, she received the highest praise from the warriors of another world whom she had steadily forged close relationships with but still admired on a spiritual level, and most importantly—

“Heh heh... uueheheheheh.”

—Chiho buried her face into the pillow and thought back to Maou hugging her when she almost fell over after the Archery Ceremonial Service.

“Heheheheheheh.”

Maou had called her by name for the first time.

When she first entered MgRonalds, he addressed her as “Sasaki-san.”

Afterwards, it had always been “Chi-chan.”

He said it together with her surname, but it was first time she had been called “Chiho” by Maou.

“Uuheheheheheheh.”

Filled with happiness, embarrassment, and pride, Chiho rolled on her bed for a long time, then suddenly got up like she had come to her senses—

“Alright, I should be unpacking now.”

—and started taking things out from her large boston bag.

She did not stay overnight in Ente Isla, but she was still travelling to a foreign place, other than a jacket and a change of clothes, she also brought many things which she might have needed to use.

“However, other than the digital camera, I did not use anything else.”

Chiho looked at her virtually untouched towels and change of clothes and smiled in a troubled manner.

Most of the necessities had been prepared ahead of time by Suzuno and Nord, who were already used to staying in Japan. As for other items, Din Dem Urs and Alberto had made adequate preparations.

“But it’s alright since the digital camera was useful. I took a lot of pictures.”

Chiho had never travelled overseas before, so when she was around the Demon Fortress, she never went further than three hundred feet away from the fortress to avoid causing trouble to any people or demons.

Therefore, from Chiho’s perspective, Fiensi’s culture, customs, weather, language, race, and animals, none of which could not be found in Japan, were all very new.

“But if I develop those photos from Fiensi, will it cause some trouble?”

When she was in Japan, demons and angels felt like very close existences to her, so even if the different kinds of demons in Isla

Kentorum surprised her, she did not really have the feeling that she was in a different world.

Therefore, after she arrived at Fiensi, Chiho understood for the first time that on the other side of the “Gate” was a “foreign world” with countless strangers going about their lives.

After unpacking her luggage, Chiho began to inspect the photos in the digital camera.

The appearance of the humans of Ente Isla was such that it would not raise any suspicion were they explained as citizens from another country, so Chiho decided that besides the photo of the elephant-sized mountain goat she had taken on the spur of the moment, there would not be any problems if she did not actively show them to a lot of people.

“Heheh, granny got a shock at that time.”

Halfway through her inspection, Chiho smiled when she saw the photo she had taken together with Din Dem Urs with Lailah’s help.

Chiho had first met Din Dem Urs in the chairman’s office at the Fiensi Central Village Hall located in front of the Adramelechinus' Demon Spear.

At that time, Din Dem Urs was naturally suspicious of Chiho, who was tagged as “someone from another world.”

After all, in the eyes of the people of Ente Isla, Chiho felt like a normal person who could be found anywhere.

As she was in an environment where she could replenish holy magic without having to drink Holy Vitamin β , even without her mobile phone, Chiho could easily activate Idea Link to overcome the language barrier.

The object she had taken out at the time was this digital camera.

To Ente Isla, who did not even have daguerreotype, an object which could instantly draw a realistic portrait was very convincing.

After Din Dem Urs carefully examined the LED screen a few times, she finally let go of her suspicion and accepted it as fact.

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“One really does encounter many things by living longer. Even a young girl from another world is going to participate in the Jirga.”

After returning the digital camera to Chiho, Din Dem Urs sighed deeply.

“Lailah, Lanca lad, Mini-scythe, Heather.”

Din Dem Urs quickly swept her gaze over the four people who accompanied Chiho to the Northern Continent.

“I want to speak with this girl alone, please leave for the moment.”

“Eh?”

“But...”

“Madam Din Dem Urs, this is a little...”

Lailah, Lumark, and Suzuno got a shock, and only Alberto stood up quietly.

“Suzuno-san, Lailah-san, Lumark-san, please don’t worry about me.”

Chiho also asked the three of them to comply with Din Dem Urs’s instructions.

“Being watched like that by all of you, neither I nor the girl can say what we’re really thinking. She’s not a warrior, right? Even if I believe that she is someone from another world, she might have been forced here by you scary looking people.”

“Lidem!”

Lailah protested against this extreme explanation, but because they had to leave Chiho in the care of the Urs clan in the end, Suzuno also made up her mind and with Alberto’s help, pulled Lailah out of the room.

The wood within the stove in the chairman's office crackled a few times, and Chiho, standing in front of the desk, remembering that she was facing an important person who ruled over one of the five continents of Ente Isla, started to feel a little nervous.

“Relax, not that I think it will help in any way even if I said this. You're called Chiho, right?”

“Y-Yes.”

“From what they have said, how much of it is true?”

“Eh?”

“I hope you're not offended by this. From my point of view, you don't seem like the type of person described by Mini-scythe or Lailah, an important person who can manipulate Demon King Satan or Hero Emilia. Saying that you're a naïve noble young lady who doesn't know anything about the suffering in the world would have been more believable to me.”

Hearing that she could manipulate the Demon King and Hero at will, Chiho started wondering how Suzuno and the others introduced her.

Din Dem Urs did not give Chiho, who had been disparaged, any time to think, and immediately continued to speak,

“However, Heather and the Lanca lad can be trusted when it comes to work, it's impossible for them to recommend a useless person. Which is why I don't understand this.”

Din Dem Urs stood up as she spoke.

She was smaller than Chiho, but Chiho felt as if she had witnessed a mountain moving.

“Simply put, who are you to these people, to Emilia and the others?”

“I...”

Chiho felt that she was in a work interview.

Chiho did not know what was Din Dem Urs's intention when she asked this question, but from Chiho's personality, she could not choose to give a vague answer or lie about it.

So she answered honestly.

"I'm their friend."

"Oh? Friend?"

"Yes. Friend. I can only say this."

Din Dem Urs widened her eyes as if she had been shocked by this answer, and Chiho, thinking that she was being suspected, elaborated hurriedly, "I know what had happened to Ente Isla in the past two years. This might make Madam Din Dem Urs unhappy, but if anyone asks why I am involved with Ente Isla, I can only say it's because I have become friends with Emilia-san and Demon King Satan."

"Friends with Emilia and Demon King Satan. Do you really know the meaning of the term friend?"

"Eating together, going out together, working together, cooking together, or talking about random topics, I, Emilia-san and Satan-san, have been living this kind of life."

"That is really... surprising."

Din Dem Urs readjusted her monocle and said this in surprise.

"However, I have always caused trouble for Emilia-san and Satan-san, getting protected by them and being unable to help them at all. Therefore, as Suzu... ah, Crestia Bell-san and Lailah-san are willing to give me this rare chance, I hope I can work hard!"

"...Wait, please wait a moment. For someone at my advanced age, the things you are saying are too novel, I can't really keep up."

After that, Din Dem Urs asked a few more questions, and Chiho answered all of them honestly.

At the beginning, Din Dem Urs seemed to be probing more about

Chiho, but midway through, purely out of curiosity, she started asking about how Emi, Suzuno, and Maou lived in a foreign world, and Chiho also reverted to her usual way of addressing Emi and Maou, and in the end, the two of them talked about how Lailah's bad habit of leaving stuff around still had not improved.

“Oh my, I'll take back my sentence of how you're a naïve noble. The dangerous situations you have been through might be more than that of those experienced by a normal knight troop combined.”

“I have never overcome any dangers with my own power. Every single time, I was helped by Yusa-san, Maou-san, or Suzuno-san.”

“Humility is a virtue, but against those guys participating in the Jirga, who love to stand out, you won't be able to win like this. Miniscythe and Lailah might have made it sound like the archery ceremony is the main event, but since I have to be the one to nominate you, you have to show your valiant spirit, enough to convince Demon King Satan into accepting your request.”

“Do...Don't mention that again! Ah, this means!”

As the two of them spoke, Din Dem Urs had already seen that Chiho harbored feelings for Maou and teased her about it, but from that sentence just now, it also meant that Din Dem Urs had agreed to nominate Chiho as a candidate for the Jirga.

“Compared to wanting to save the world and humans, the desire to help a sweetheart or friend is more trustworthy. I will agree to become your guardian and nominate your participation in the Jirga.”

“T-Thank you.”

In the past, only Kaori and her mother had mercilessly exposed Chiho's feelings, so Chiho suddenly felt a sense of closeness to Din Dem Urs, who had labelled Maou as Chiho's “sweetheart.”

However, in the next instant, Din Dem Urs suddenly showed a stern expression and turned towards Chiho.

“I am going to ask you one last question. Lailah and Mini-scythe might not have thought this far, and Heather and the Lanca lad might have known but chose not to tell you, but I still need to confirm one thing with you. I hope you can know about this first before deciding if you wish to participate in their plans. If you wish to withdraw after hearing this, tell me honestly. At that time, I will say that I have rejected you, so please don't force yourself because you're afraid of them, alright?”

“A-Alright.”

“I heard that all of you plan to fight the god on the moon. If your side wins, the holy magic which permeates the whole world currently might disappear. If there is no holy magic, the humans of Ente Isla would be unable to use magic. You can understand this much, right?”

“...Yes.”

“This time, you plan to borrow Lailah's power and obtain the demonic spear with your archery skills. Through the Jirga, your archery skills might be seen by a lot of people.”

“Yes.”

“In the near future, bows and arrows will be used on the battlefield, and as you show a high level of archery skill, many people might die from archery when that happens. Knowing this, do you still want to participate?”

There was no change in Chiho's expression, and thinking that Chiho did not understand the situation, Din dem Urs continued to explain, “After losing spells, the convenient method of long distance attacks, the thing to play an active role in the battlefield will definitely be that of archery, with your skills as the model. The Jirga, this time, might change the trend of the battles in Ente Isla. With regards to this...”

“It's alright.”

But Chiho did not wait for Din Dem Urs to finish and interrupted her.

“You said it’s alright?”

“Yes. It’s fine. Me shooting at the Jirga, and archery being used in battle in the near future, are two unrelated things.”

Chiho boldly replied to the question from the Enclosure Chief.

“Because Madam Din Dem Urs already knows everything, so whether I participate or not, for the future of the Urs clan and the Northern Continent, from today onwards, you would start to push for the development of archery skills, right?”

“.....”

“Lumark-san and the people of the Eastern Continent are the same. They are faced with the trouble of not being understood by the other countries because they had joined the battle to defeat God first, but they are also able to draw up various strategies before the other countries. I am not so arrogant to think that my power can change the world. Even if the power used in wars in the far future is based off my archery skill, how that power should be used in the future should be decided by the people who possess the power at that time. And...” Chiho said with a smile, “I need to become Maou-san’s, Yusa-san’s, and Alas=Ramus-chan’s strength at this Jirga. This is not the time to back off because this action could change the world. Didn’t Madam Din Dem Urs say just now that 『Compared to wanting to save the world and humans, the desire to help a sweetheart or friend is more trustworthy』?”

Chiho straightened her posture and said with determination, “That is why I will participate in the Jirga.”

“...This is surprising.”

After feeling stunned for a short while, Din Dem Urs smiled happily.

“It seems like I have been depending on the power of the fragment

too much, causing my skills in judging people to become rusty.”

Then, for the first time, she took off her monocle in front of Chiho and pointed to the purple fragment on it.

“The fragment embedded in this monocle can inform me if the other party is lying by changing colors. But all I know is whether the other party is lying or not, it cannot handle those people who believe the lies to be truth. If someone hides their fear and says things beyond their own ability, this monocle will let me know immediately. However, because I have become overly dependent on this ability, I missed the fact that you have been emitting a courageous light since the beginning.”

Din Dem Urs, returning to her desk with a laugh, picked up a document.

“Naïve noble young lady? I have said something really stupid. Mini-scythe really showed an amazing trump card this time. You have more capacity to be a Hero than Emilia.”

Din Dem Urs tucked her monocle into her clothes and looked straight at Chiho with her own eyes.

“It’s regretful that you’re not my actual granddaughter, Chiho Sasaki Urs.”

“Thank you, Grandmother Lidem.”

Chiho bowed deeply to the great leader of this continent which was even able to accept the chaotic history given by the Demon King Army.

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She might have said some big words, but even when it was mentioned that her actions might affect Ente Isla’s future, Chiho did waver.

Perhaps Din Dem Urs had seen that.

But even so, because Chiho answered that question, she could be

nominated as a participant in the Jirga. Chiho felt that the next time she talked to Din Dem Urs, they might open up more to each other.

Din Dem Urs had witnessed history long past and ruled over many people with a macroscopic view. Chiho wanted to listen to her talk about helping someone she liked the most and what it meant by one person's actions possibly having the power to change the world.

“Unbelievable.”

Din Dem Urs had not reached one hundred years old in age, but to Chiho's eyes, it felt that she understood this world more than the demons or angels who had lived for hundreds, or even thousands of years.

Was it because Chiho was a human who would not live longer than one hundred years?

Or was it because their concept of time was different?

“.....”

If so, she would be unable to walk the same passage of time as Maou after all.

Even if she successfully got together with Maou, she would turn old one day, and Maou would remain in his youthful state.

At that time, could she and Maou feel the same on the biological level?

That was probably impossible.

Perhaps it had been impossible from the start.

When she deduced this answer easily, Chiho instantly felt a little dizzy.

There was a huge difference in lifespan between animals and humans, and how they perceived one year would be very different, time was passing all the same, but Chiho's impression and Maou's impression would be very different.

Lailah and Nord were constantly saddled by such a worry, and they continued to live without finding the answer.

However, from what Din Dem Urs said, the effect of time on Lailah was much slower than that on a normal human, and could be described as carefree.

What was Maou's sense of time like?

The answer which kept getting pushed back.

A future which could not be seen.

She would definitely die earlier than the person she liked the most.

This truth was too harsh.

“Ah.”

When she fell back on her bed, what greeted her field of vision was the moon outside the window.

“The desire to become immortal, does it feel like this?”

Just as this thought pierced through some corner of Chiho's heart, so dark that even trying to discern between justice and evil was meaningless.

“Hm!?”

As if a heavy object had hit her window, a loud sound was suddenly heard, causing Chiho to jump up in fright.

After a soft and heavy spherical object hit the glass on the window with a loud bang, it started to fall downwards.

At the same time—

“What was... that just now?”

The holy magic within Chiho's body sensed a strange commotion in the surroundings.

But rather than the reason, she had to first check if the window

was broken, and what had hit the window in the first place.

“Chiho! What caused that loud sound just now!?”

Her mother’s voice was heard from downstairs.

“I don’t know! Seems like a round object hit the window... I’m going to take a look!”

After Chiho shouted this, she cautiously opened the window which had been hit by an object.

Luckily, the window was not broken, but scratches from being hit by something still remained on it.

“W-What was that... hm?”

Chiho discovered that something seemed to be stuck on the edge of the window which was being opened cautiously. Examining it carefully—

“A feather?”

—she discovered that it was a black bird feather.

“What’s going on, did a crow or something not notice the glass and accidentally hit it?”

The sky was not so bright that crows would fly about, but Chiho still frowned and looked down from the window, and discovered that in the center of her not so large yard, there was a foreign black mass about the size of a basketball.

Just as Chiho thought *So it was hit by a crow who couldn’t see well at night after all*, a sound... no, a voice entered her ears.

“Ughhh..... chirp.....”

She recognized this voice.

A raspy voice which did not match its contents, and a bird with black feathers.

“...Hmm?”

Chiho had even forgotten to suck in a breath, and with an expression of anguish resulting from this, she left her window open and ran downstairs frantically.

“Wah, Chiho? What’s wrong?”

Chiho did not respond to her mother’s call from the living room and ran out of the porch into the yard.

Then struggling in the middle of the yard...

“C-Camio-san?”

It was not a black chicken, but a demon who looked like that animal.

“Who... who are you... chirp.....chirp...”

Having appeared at the Choshi seaside before, having the most experience in the Demon King Army, and even raising the Demon King Satan, the great demon — Demon Minister Camio from the Pahalo Denino clan, had crashed into the window of Chiho’s room for unknown reasons and fallen into the yard, finally turning into the form of a chicken because he had lost his power.

“Hang in there! What happened? A-Anyway, you have to come to my room first... eh?”

Chiho wanted to pick up Camio who had collapsed weakly on the ground, but her expression turned stony when her hand felt something warm.

After stretching her hand towards the light from the street lamp which had spilled into her yard, Chiho realized that her hand was covered in blood.

It seemed like Camio was seriously injured.

“W-We have to treat you... Camio-san, hang in there!”

“Ugh, uh, I don’t know who you are, but thank you, chirp...”

Camio’s voice was so weak that it seemed like it would get cut off

anytime.

Chiho was not sure if Camio did not remember her, or it was hard to see at night, or because his injuries made his consciousness fuzzy, but either way, Chiho was very shaken.

And after trying to pick Camio up, Chiho realized that a whole chicken was unexpectedly huge and heavy, causing her to worry if she could bring Camio to her own room without being discovered by her mother.

In addition, even if she wanted to administer treatment, based on her experience in the past, demonic magic was required to heal demons, but currently, Maou, Ashiya, Urushihara, and the others were in Ente Isla and could not immediately come over.

She did not know if a household first aid kit would be useful in this situation.

She had an impression that she had heard that demons used to be humans, but this was a definitely a chicken, or perhaps an actual birdman, Chiho started thinking wild thoughts in her panic.

“W-What should I do, I don’t know if Mum has gone back to the living room.”

“Uu, uh... chirp...”

“T-There’s no choice! If the situation is really bad, I can only call the nearby veterinarian...”

Though she felt troubled for a short while, as Camio was so weak that he could only *chirp*, Chiho made a decision to return inside her house.

But just as Chiho was prepared to check out the situation inside her house via the porch door, she noticed an unexpected person standing there.

“I’m sorry, I put your mother to sleep. Either way, boil some water first, it doesn’t matter if it’s not clean, and bring some towels over,

the more the better.”

“Amane-san?”

Standing there looking very sleepy, with her face bearing signs that her long hair, which was not normally let down, had been pressed against her face, and wearing wrinkled pants with a grey sweatshirt and black down jacket, was Ooguro Amane. It felt as if she had been called out on short notice when she was relaxing at home.

“W-Why? When? How did you enter my home?”

“I detected a strange reaction from the mechanisms that Gab-kun had set up here to protect this place thirty seconds ago so I came in from the room window which Chiho-chan had left open.”

After explaining this in one breath, Amane snatched Camio away from Chiho’s hands.

“Wash your hands first. This is blood containing demonic magic, so it might have negative effects on the body. To be safe, you should drink a little of that beverage from before.”

“Ah, a-alright.”

After saying this, Amane roughly took Camio to the second floor.

Chiho stood there, stunned for a while, but immediately snapped back to her senses and ran into the bathroom, carefully washing the blood off her hands.

“...She’s sleeping.”

Her mother was sitting on the sofa in the living room, and slept with the television still on, just like her father after he worked the night shift.

Chiho, suddenly feeling uneasy, moved her ear closer to her mother, but the breathing from her mother who was sound asleep did not sound abnormal.

Just as Chiho took out the towels from the bathroom, filled up the

kettle, placed it on the gas stove, and was anxiously waiting for the water to boil.

“Kya?”

The sound of a heavy object being dropped on the second floor was heard from the second floor, causing Chiho to jump up slightly in fright.

Because not even a closet falling over would produce such a sound, Chiho rushed up to the second floor without turning off the stove.

“A-Amane-san...”

Once Chiho ran into her room, she froze because she saw an unbelievable situation.

Amane was using her hands to grab the tip of a certain object which had flown in from Chiho’s open window.

It was a spear with three tips. Amane looked out of the window with a stern expression, blood coming out from her hands.

“Don’t worry. The other party seems to have run away.”

Amane answered this—

“...Ughhchirp...”

—while roughly grabbing Camio with her other hand, both her hands were covered in fresh blood, and it looked really bloody.

“Y-Yeah... erm, is your hand alright?”

“You can pass me an OK band later.”

Chiho did not think that the wound could be settled with just an OK band, but Amane stared at the tip of the spear, still dripping with blood, and spoke without any change in her expression, “This is bad. If the other party is using this kind of method, then I won’t make it in time even if I rush over with full speed. The one being targeted this time is this chicken and not Chiho-chan, but it looks

like we have to re-evaluate the defensive measures in this area.”

Amane planned to pull the trident into Chiho’s room, but because the length of the spear was longer than the diagonal length of Chiho’s room, she had given up after pulling it in halfway.

“Hmph, actually using such a vintage weapon. Either way, it must have come from that place known as Heaven, do you have any impression of this thing?”

“I do.”

Chiho nodded with a serious expression.

Imitating flames, a huge spear with its tip split into three parts.

That was the spear belonging to Kamael, the Sephirah Guardian angel who had attacked Sasahata High School.

“But I remember that the spear should have been broken by Maou-san and Acies in Ente Isla.”

“You do know that the other party is a normal species with a social structure, right? It might have been described as a god weapon or a weapon existing in legends, but as long as the guys who made it in the first place left the designs, materials, methodologies, and processing facilities behind, it would be possible to repair or make a new one... but before that, do you hear a strange sound?”

“Oh no! I forgot to turn off the fire for boiling water!”

Chiho, who vaguely heard the sharp sounds of boiling water from the water kettle, sucked in a breath and rushed back downstairs frantically.

“I really don’t know what Chiho-chan’s standards of ‘oh no’ are anymore.”

She could calmly examine the strangely shaped weapon which had flown into her room from outside, but became frantic when she heard the sound of boiling water, Amane smiled wryly at Chiho’s behaviour and frowned when she looked between the things she

held in both her hands.

“In that place known as the Demon World, what exactly happened?”

Amane knew that this black chicken was considered an important figure amongst the demons in Ente Isla.

Since this important demon appeared in Japan in this state, it was not difficult to deduce that some emergency had occurred.

“Ah~ this is troublesome! I can’t do this anymore! This has nothing to do with me! If you want to cause a ruckus, then do it over there! Don’t come here!”

The complaint shouted by the Sephirah who had a blood covered chicken in one hand and a huge dangerous weapon in the other—

“...Lord Demon King... I am too ashamed to face you... chirp...”

—could only be heard by Camio, who should have been in the Demon World commanding the demons in their search for the last Noah Gear — the Astral Gem.

AUTHOR, AFTERWORD – AND YOU –

I have heard this said before: the one who should be thanked the most during Valentine's Day is the person who first thought up obligatory chocolate.

There are not that many people who are brave enough to give sincere chocolate to the person they admire, but if it is just giving simple chocolate based on the ordinary feelings of having interacted with each other everyday, it does not seem that difficult. Thanks to this excuse, the amount of people who buy chocolate while harboring various feelings naturally increases.

It is said that the sales of chocolate on 14th February alone accounts for 20% of annual chocolate sales within Japan.

As this might infringe on the Act to do away with empty formalities and sexual harassment at work, I have heard that giving obligatory chocolate at work has recently gone on a downward trend, but because of that, Valentine's Day should have reverted to its original function, which would be allowing those females who want to confess to the people they really like and those people who want to repay their feelings from daily interactions to give gifts based on their sincere feelings.

After thinking back on the history of Valentine's Day like this, I could not help but think that those people who created White Day miscalculated.

The trend of celebrating "White Day" came from Japan.

There are many stories explaining the origins of Valentine's Day, with the earliest tracing back to the Ancient Rome, but as of 1980, Japan's National Confectionery Industry Association has set 14th March as "White Day"

It is not known which store was the first one to sell the sweets

used to reply to Valentine's Day, but the confectionary industry had the thought of "setting a day for return gifts for Valentine's Day which was recognized all over the world," and created this day known as White Day.

Traditionally, if a person liked a gift given them during a celebration, they needed to prepare a return gift at half or one-third of the value. From this, it could be seen that since a long time ago, one-sidedly receiving gifts was frowned upon, and it might even cause someone to feel uneasy. **|1|**

Therefore, it is not difficult to understand why there was a desire to create a date for gift returning, but since an unknown time, people began to advocate a secret rule, that "the return gift for White Day should be three times the value of the gift," something which would shock even the most capable bankers, causing people to think that after receiving chocolate, they would have to get something like an accessory as a return gift.

The National Confectionary Association was a union which made confectionaries—in other words, they were an industrial body for the sweet companies. They planned for everyone to use the method of giving chocolate to respond to Valentine's Day, molding White Day into "a day for giving sweets," but I have never seen any news of a great increase of sweets sales on 14th March. This probably means that their original goal was not successfully achieved.

Occasionally, twisted opinions such as calling Valentine's Day "a conspiracy from the sweet industry" appear, but after carefully tracing them to the source, one discovers that it was actually White Day which was a strategy by the confectionary industry.

Ignoring whether it is a conspiracy or not, all customs in the world are based on an action done by someone because of a current situation, the weather, local geography, or the culture of the time, and slowly took root when many people started to copy it. Then, after many adaptations over a long period of time, it finally turns

into what is observed in the modern world.

Therefore, all customs slowly change based on the current trend, weather, area or other reasons, and in the distant future, they may turn into something completely different or be eradicated completely.

Just a small thought or action can affect the lives or habits of many people in the future, this was the story of Volume 16 of 《Hataraku! Maou-sama》.

Without using the exaggerated term of Butterfly Effect, whether it was direct or indirect, as long as humans live in this world, small but definite effects will occur.

Wanting to change established practices in the world is not easy, but whether people hope for it or not, the “World” continues to change slightly, even in this instant.

I hope that the story of this group of people trying to find their own path while struggling in the whirlwind of change brings happiness to everyone this time.

Then, see you again in the next volume!



TRANSLATOR'S NOTES AND REFERENCES

Chapter 2

[1] Rakugan refers to Rice Flower Cake.

[2] Matcha is green tea. Wasanbon is a fine-grained Japanese sugar, traditionally made in the Shikoku prefectures of Tokushima and Kagawa. The sugar is often used for Japanese sweets. Kuromitsu is a Japanese sugar syrup, literally “black honey.” It is similar to molasses, but thinner and milder. It is typically made from unrefined kokutō, and is a central ingredient in many Japanese sweets.

CHAPTER 3

[1] Scythe in Japanese is Kamazuki, while the processed fish meat is known as Kamaboko.

CHAPTER 4

[1] In Japan, the school year starts from April.

[2] Toriyumi is the posture of holding the bow and arrows at one's side.

[3] Haya is the first arrow to be shot, the feathers of the arrow curve to the left. Otoya is the second arrow to be fired, the feathers of the arrow curve to the right.

[4] Go look for a standard Japanese archery stance if you can't imagine what it looks like.

[5] Kasumi Mato, a mist target, is a target used in archery, basically an image of multiple concentric circles.

[6] Zanshin is a state of awareness, of relaxed alertness in Japanese martial arts. In kyūdō, zanshin means the body posture after the loosing of an arrow; the posture is intended to reflect the higher meaning of zanshin, which is a mental aspect maintained before, during, and after an action.

[7] Hoshi Mato is another archery target. It is mostly white in colour with only one black dot in the centre as the target.

[8] Ashibumi: foot placement. Dori: body positioning. Torikake: Using the right hand to hold the bow string and arrows while wearing a protective glove. Tenouchi: the grip of the left hand on the bow. Momomi: Turning one's gaze to look at the target.

[9] This refers to the shooter being able to see the full target from the left side of the bow.

[10] Yabusame is a type of mounted archery in traditional

Japanese archery. An archer on a running horse shoots three special "turnip-headed" arrows successively at three wooden targets.

[11] The Toshiya or the arrows which hit the target, was an archery exhibition contest held on the west veranda of the Sanjusangen-do temple in Kyoto, Japan.

[12] In Japan, girls can give guys two types of chocolate. “Giri-choco” (obligatory chocolate), and “Honmei-choco” (true feelings chocolate, which I translated as sincere chocolate). Giri-choco is meant to be for friends, colleagues, bosses, and close male friends. “Giri” means obligation hence this Giri-choco has no romance involved. On the other hand, Honmei-choco is given to a boyfriend, lover, or husband with true love.

AUTHOR, AFTERWORD – AND YOU –

[1] Gift giving has a long history in Japan and still is a strong cultural tenet.